University of Alberta

Language Arts Curriculum Development for Barbados: A New Approach

by

Patricia Elizabeth Carter

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Elementary Education

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Language Arts Curriculum Development for Barbados: A New Approach submitted by Patricia Elizabeth Carter in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving and supportive children, Darryl and Shakira Carter.

And to:

The inspirational memories of my father, Morton Lionel Daniel and to my mother Olga Elise Daniel, whose dreams I have realized.

ABSTRACT

This study consisted of two phases. The first phase describes the design and development of a proposed curriculum framework for elementary English language arts for Barbadian schools. The framework is based on current language arts research and literature, including a personal growth model combined with constructivist principles, and the concept of spiral curriculum. The second phase describes the investigative component of the study. Various stakeholder groups in Barbados (teachers, administrators, educators, parents and business persons) were invited to provide preliminary feedback on a proposed English language arts framework in order to gain a better understanding of the interplay between stakeholder contribution and language arts curriculum development in the Barbadian context. Thirty-one persons participated in the study by responding to a primary questionnaire and a supportive questionnaire and checklist.

This descriptive study examined the initial reactions of stakeholders to a proposed new language arts curriculum framework for Barbados. Content analysis was used to identify themes across the main questionnaire and the supportive questionnaire and checklist, as a means of understanding what could be involved in the process of proposing and refining a language arts curriculum development framework consistent with constructivist principles. The study also explored the feasibility of a curriculum development model for Barbados based on the cooperation of stakeholder groups.

The study documented both phases of the exploration: design and development of the proposed language arts framework, and the initiation of consultative curriculum development through initial feedback from stakeholders. The major findings indicated that a consultative curriculum development model is feasible for the Barbadian context and that a new approach

to language arts curriculum development was favourable to stakeholder groups. The study revealed that the proposed approach for language arts instruction required six components new to elementary language arts curriculum for Barbados. These include a philosophical statement, multiple program goals, major objectives and experiences/activities deliberately arranged to allow for flexibility in planning and continuity of instruction, assessment opportunities directly related to instruction, and that these former features are arranged as a spiral curriculum organized into age clusters. The study highlighted the need for professional development of teachers, principals and parents in terms of a more integrated, process-oriented approach to language arts instruction.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 1

INTRODUCTION 1

Current Issues Impacting Language Arts in Barbados 3

The Curriculum Development Model 3

Language Arts Instruction 3

The White Paper 4

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY 5

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM 7

Focus Questions 8

Significance of the Study 8

Limitations 10

Delimitations 11

Definitions of Key Terms Used in the Study 11

Overview of the Study 12

PHASE I

DEVELOPMENT AND DOCUMENTATION OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK 13

CHAPTER 2 13

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 13

Introduction 13

Constructing the Foundation for a New Curriculum Design 14

Determining a Philosophy 17

Issues Impacting Curricula 21

Theoretical Perspectives on the English Language Arts 28

Defining the English Language Arts 28

Language Arts and Forms of Representation 30

Language Arts and Language Acquisition and Concept Development 31

Language Arts and Literacy 32

Language Arts and Cognition 38
Language Arts and the Learner 39
Summary 41
CHAPTER 3 43
THE LANGUAGE ARTS FRAMEWORK 43
Introduction 43
The Philosophical Statement 44
Program Goals 46
Major Objectives 50
Suggested Learning Activities 52
Assessment Opportunities 58
Summary 65
PHASE II
CHAPTER 4 67
EXPLORATORY FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDER GROUPS 67
Introduction 67
Research Design Framework 67
Data Collection 68
Participant Selection 72
Triangulation 75
Research Procedures 75
Data Analysis 82
Trustworthiness/Dependability 83
Ethical Considerations 83
Summary 84
CHAPTER 5 85
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 85
Introduction 85
Stakeholder Response 85

Responses of Stakeholder Groups to Involvement in Curriculum Development 85
The Language Arts Framework 88
Summary 148
CHAPTER 6 151
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS 151
Introduction 151
Review of the Study 151
Major Findings 152
Implications From the Findings of the Study 154
Implications for Cooperative Curriculum Development 154
Implications for the Proposed Language Arts Framework 155
Implications for Teacher Professional Development 156
Implications for the Implementation of the Proposed Language Arts Framework 158
Summary 163
Conclusions of the Study 163
Recommendations for Further Research 163
Personal Reflections 165
REFERENCES 166
APPENDIX A 189
APPENDIX B 199
APPENDIX C 218
APPENDIX D 231
APPENDIX E 235

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	Comparison of Philosophical Approaches	19
Table 2:	Suggested Learning Activities with Major Objectives	54
Table 3:	Descriptions of Assessment Opportunities used in the Language Arts Framework	62
Table 4:	Assessment Opportunities Selected for the Language Arts Framework	64
Table 5:	An Example of the Organization of the Language Arts Framework	65
Table 6:	Summary of Participants Involved in the Study	73
Table 7:	Practitioner Concerns about Mandated Language Arts Programs	87
Table 8:	Summary of Responses to Program Goals by Stakeholder Groups	93
Table 9:	Summary of Responses for Major Objectives by Group for the 3 - 5 Age Group	99
Table 10:	Summary of Responses for Suggested Learning Experiences/ Activities by Group for the 3 - 5 Age Group	103
Table 11:	Summary of Responses for Assessment Opportunities by Group for the 3 - 5 Age Group	108
Table 12:	Summary of Responses for Major Objectives by Group for the 6 - 8 Age Group	113
Table 13:	Summary of Responses to Suggested Learning Experiences/ Activities for the 6 - 8 Age Group	117
Table 14:	Summary of Responses to Assessment Opportunities by Group for the 6 - 8 Age Group	122
Table 15:	Summary of Responses to Major Objectives by Group for the 9 - 11 Age Group	125
Table 16:	Summary of Responses to Suggested Learning Experiences/ Activities by group for the 9 - 11 Age Group	133

Table 17: Summary of Responses to Assessment Opportunities by Group for the 9 - 11 Age Group 135

Table 18: Responses to the Employability Skills Profile by Business Persons 138

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Proposed Curriculum Development Model for Barbados 16

Figure 2: Interactive-transactional Theoretical Perspective..... 37

Figure 3: Illustration of Triangulation for the Study 75

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Barbados is a tiny island, measuring 166 square miles in area and located at approximately thirteen degrees north of the equator and fifty-nine degrees west of the Greenwich Meridian. It lies in the south-southeastern section of the Caribbean archipelago in close proximity to the South American country of Guyana. The close-knit population of about 250,000 is mostly of African descent with a minority comprised of mostly European descendants.

Barbados is a product of British colonialism and the British influence is still evident, politically and educationally. The island is a politically stable, democratic, traditionally oral society. It recently gained independence (in 1966) and is recognized by world organizations as a developing country.

It is not surprising that the first language of its people is a dialect of African-English origin - Bajan. Standard English however, is the official language and so the textbooks used for instruction are written in Standard English. It is correct to assume that no textbooks are written in Bajan, probably because it is not economically feasible.

After independence, some 32 years ago, a mandate was set in place which created the circumstances for compulsory education at the primary and secondary levels. At that time, it was expected that the schools had the sole responsibility for making children literate and were highly respected in achieving that goal. Shortly thereafter, Barbados gained the reputation for having a superior educational system and boasted a high percentage of literacy in the mid to late 1970s.

However, since the start of my teaching career at a secondary school in 1979, I have observed a steady decline in the quality of student intake at the beginning of each academic year. From the perspective of a geography teacher, it became more evident with each passing year just how poorly some children were performing during their first year at the secondary level. These students' literacy development was obviously delayed. Since they were first year students, it seemed logical to believe that these students were graduating from primary school without the necessary skills and strategies for successful secondary academic performance.

This situation can arise when there is a mismatch between instruction (activities and materials) and what research reports about how children become literate (Taylor, 1983).

Reasons for the decline in the literacy rate in Barbados have, to my knowledge, not been officially investigated but have been discussed informally on radio talk shows and in other forums. However, it is possible to speculate about the reasons for the perceived decline in literacy. One reason may have to do with more sophisticated definitions of literacy that go beyond merely being able to sign and read one's name, as in the past. Another reason could be the increase in the number of children attending school compared with previous times. Yet another may have to do with the fact that since the definition of literacy has changed so has the criteria for assessing literacy.

From 1979 until 1995, I was a geography teacher who had started on a journey of professional development, trying to become competent in assisting my students in becoming successful learners. The reality is that many secondary teachers feel unprepared to help students who are experiencing academic difficulty, as our training is specifically for the secondary level.

Though my own professional development in literacy was helpful, it was not entirely adequate. In addition, my orientation to helping my students has changed over the years because of my postgraduate experiences. Initially, I perceived the situation as one that should be resolved from a remedial perspective. After further professional development that entailed an almost year-long course in reading intervention and a year-long course in reading and writing diagnosis, my perspective again changed to reflect a different orientation to intervention. Finally, and after much reflection and deliberation on the professional literature, my orientation has become one which focuses on delivering quality language arts instruction which aims to prevent academic difficulty, rather than on "remediating" or "intervening" after the delay has occurred. This stance is based on the premise that if teachers engage in instruction which aims at creating responsible, independent learners in a democratic learning community, then students should be much more successful. Further, since language arts is the core subject for academic achievement, the initial target of improved instruction must be primary language arts instruction.

Current Issues Impacting Language Arts Instruction in Barbados

The Curriculum Development Model

The curriculum development model which has been in place since Barbadian independence in 1966, is a top-down model. In this model all curriculum decisions are made by ministerial staff, after which the teacher is presented with a syllabus to be followed for curriculum implementation. The current language arts curriculum in Barbados, is a product of a model of curriculum development which makes instruction a sub-system of the entire education system, while system and sub-system are mutually dependent (Oliva, 1997). In this hierarchical system of curriculum development, the language arts curriculum is mandated. There has been no indication to my knowledge, as to whether this method of curriculum development has ever been evaluated.

Language Arts Instruction

Language arts instruction is based on a syllabus which is guided by a general aim for all age groups: "The basic aim of the language arts programme is the development of skills in each pupil, according to his potential, in listening and speaking, and in reading and writing." The current language arts program has no explicit philosophy related to the preparation of students in becoming life-long learners and active, democratic citizens of the future. The syllabus is organized by class (grade) level for the 7 - 11 age groups. Refer to Appendix A, p. 189, for an example of a language arts syllabus for one age group. Each class level is sub-divided into Oral Expression (Speech Skills, Listening Skills, Poetry, Reading) and Written Expression (Composition, Organizational, Vocabulary Building Skills, Writing Skills, Spelling and Grammar Skills). Each skill to be achieved by the pupil is listed in detail and becomes progressively more advanced. Consequently, elementary language arts instruction in Barbados is skills-based, sequential (part-to-whole), and compartmentalized because it is grounded in a learning philosophy that stresses the maturity of the learner as a prerequisite for learning development, and rote practice is emphasized for mastery of learning skills.

I believe that the result of such a system is one of the key factors linked with the increasing number of primary school graduates who have literacy problems. Associated problems in the society also arise when these students continue through the educational

system without meaningful and effective literacy instruction. I believe that the current method of elementary language arts instruction does not adequately prepare students to be life-long learners and thinkers nor does it properly prepare them to actively participate in a democratic society.

The White Paper

After elections in 1994, the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture published and released a "White Paper on Education Reform: Preparing for the Twenty-first Century" with the theme "Each One Matters...Quality Education for all." This is an official document of the government arising from the need "to adopt a coherent set of strategic measures aimed at addressing the major issues in the education sector" (p. 5) and detailing the plan for educational reform, based on a focus on quality of instruction.

By the mid 1980s, the reputation Barbados had projected in terms of high literacy standards and an outstanding educational system had become tarnished. The two leading newspapers on the island published articles which implied that significant numbers of children were transferring to secondary school with the lowest standards in years. Our literacy rates were being questioned and ultimately teachers were being held responsible.

Since Barbados had already achieved its desired goal of compulsory education until age 16, it became apparent, as The White Paper states, that "[t]he challenge for Barbadian education is therefore one of quality rather than access" (p. 6).

Among the reasons stated in justifying this move for reform is the "persistently poor academic performance and absence of mechanisms to adequately reflect the attainment of students or the success or failure of the methods used in the delivery of education. It is therefore imperative that the system be reformed to address these and other issues" (p. 2).

In addition, the paper itemizes some major objectives which impact this study (among others). They are:

- reinforcing the concept that learning is a continuous, life-long process;
- enabling students to develop inquiring and creative minds;
- revaluing the role of teachers;

- sensitizing teachers to the importance of catering to the individual needs of students;
- fostering a greater partnership between the school, the home and the community; and
- strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture to plan, manage and evaluate the education system more effectively (pp. 2-3).

Also worthy of mention is the reference to the philosophy of education of Barbados in terms of preparing individuals to acquire a "positive approach towards change" in addition to being "thinkers," "innovators" and "problem-solvers." These variables are believed to be the direct result of teacher empowerment. The latter was identified as a "central plank" in the strategy to improve educational quality for individuals through continued advancement in pre-service and in-service teacher professional development.

Professional development is to consist of training in diagnostic testing as a component of effective teaching and learning especially at the primary level, where "developmental" rather than "remedial" teaching will be emphasized.

Further examination of this paper, however, discloses what appears to be a mismatch in philosophy and materials. The document stresses the shift from remedial to developmental education - one with which I am in total agreement. There seems, however, to be an inconsistency in light of this view and the movement towards creating "thinkers, innovators and problem-solvers." On page 21 of the document, is the proposal that parents continue to purchase workbooks for their children for English. It is my belief that a clear purpose for language arts education and a sound, complementary method of achieving that purpose is crucial to our very existence as a nation whose official language is English and to our continued existence as a democratic society.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

These issues form the basis of this research. These are the reasons why this research is concerned with documenting an alternative curriculum development model. Based on prevailing readings on democracy and education (Bruner, 1960; Dewey, 1930; Kelly, 1995) and language arts curriculum development (Erickson, 1995; Tchudi, 1991) a model conducive

to democratic principles and beliefs will be proposed as more suitable for the Barbadian context. This model provides the individuals responsible for implementing the curriculum (teachers and educators) with opportunities to contribute towards curriculum decisions and adds credibility to the final product (Armstrong, 1989). In addition, the resultant curriculum document is more demonstrative of a democratic approach than is the product of decision-making inherent in a top-down approach. If the curriculum to be implemented is to be long-lasting and appropriate for society, the process is equally as important as the product.

Like Tchudi (1991), I believe that there is no one fixed or correct arrangement for producing successful English language arts curricula. Each curriculum must be planned and designed to meet local needs and reflect interests including national expectations. I do, however, believe that there are approaches that are likely to be more successful than others and that these approaches focus on an appropriate "process" to achieve a quality "product," rather than focusing on product to the detriment of process and vice versa. I also believe that, for the curriculum to be successful, the total effort of its development should be a reflection of the cooperation of the various persons to be affected by the final document (Erickson, 1995; Short & Burke, 1991; Tchudi, 1991). Pratt (1980, p. v) provides the foundation for this study when he states:

> Curriculum is, and will always be, a major concern of the professional teacher. Whenever teachers seek clear purposes or better strategies for their teaching, they are reflecting on curriculum questions.

I have been driven by personal and moral purpose (Erickson, 1995; Rorty, 1982; Sergiovanni, 1992) with an awareness of a grave situation where increasing numbers of Barbadian primary school children experience difficulty with literacy activities in the classroom. I am equally driven to do something constructive about it in order to prevent such children from becoming school failures or subsequent adult illiterates. I have, over the years, become increasingly convinced that the key to understanding the cause of this problem lies hidden in the manner of elementary classroom instruction and teacher education. Through many literacy-related, postgraduate courses and many hours of reflection, I have arrived at the conclusion that if instruction and teacher education were to share a philosophy that

reflects the principle that meaning is constructed in a social context and that language is fundamental to that process, then there should be a decrease in the numbers of students who need specific instruction/intervention. Gradually, I became aware of what I could do to improve instructional quality in the English language arts as well as in teacher professional development, (Glatthorn and Fox, 1996), to transform this premise to reality. This study is the first phase in exploring this premise and in taking on the role of a grass-roots change agent (Fullan, 1991, 1993a, 1993b).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study consists of two phases. In the first phase, I propose and develop a curriculum framework for elementary English language arts (based on a personal growth model). This framework is discussed in detail in Chapter 3. In the second phase, I invite various stakeholder groups (teachers, administrators, educators, business persons and parents) to provide feedback on the proposed document in order to gain a better understanding of the interplay between stakeholder contribution and language arts curriculum development. Stakeholder participation is perceived as a necessary prerequisite to refining the language arts document and to the initiation of cooperative curriculum development. These steps are viewed as crucial to long-lasting educational reform, as outlined in The White Paper for the Barbadian context.

The study documents both phases of the investigation: the design of the language arts framework and the initiation of cooperative curriculum development through initial feedback from stakeholders. The main outcome of the study was to identify ways of refining the curriculum document based on the responses of these stakeholders and in a manner consistent with the constructivist philosophy of learning.

The main purpose of this study was to understand and document a new approach to curriculum development for an elementary English language arts framework for the 3 - 11 age group in Barbados: that is curriculum planning with the feedback from stakeholders. I have to interpreted their responses as a means of understanding how these stakeholders construct meaning from a 'custom-made' language arts curriculum framework while attaining a sense of the 'suitability' of the language arts framework for the Barbadian context.

Focus Questions

The following questions guided this study.

- What is the nature of an elementary English language arts curriculum framework designed for the Barbadian context, and based on current research and theory?
- What is the nature of stakeholder response, to a proposed language arts curriculum framework?

Significance of the Study

This study was important for several reasons. One reason is that literacy is seen by Barbadians as a vehicle for upward mobility. Barbadians have always been and continue to be proud of their education system, but in order to maintain the opportunities for the upcoming citizens, reform action must be literacy-based and must be aimed at activating quality language arts instruction (Newton, 1995). To this end, the study is timely because it realizes one crucial educational goal of the current government: "to ensure that acquisition of foundation skills is emphasized" (The White Paper, 1995, p. 24).

Not only does it aim to make the latter idea a reality (with one modification: that strategies replace skills), this study becomes a documented account of the task, thus becoming a needed contribution to Barbadian research specifically, and to language arts curriculum planning generally.

Another reason that this study is important is that it is the first time a deliberate attempt has been made to develop a language arts curriculum for Barbados based on current research. In addition, it is the first time that stakeholder groups have been invited to participate in curriculum development in the beginning stages of the curriculum development process. This may appear to be a small step for countries in the developed world, especially in the North American context. However, for Barbados it is a most significant step.

Academically, it provides a theoretical framework to a culturally-relevant approach that seeks to eventually alleviate a serious literacy problem in Barbados by creating an English language arts program that does not separate language, literacy or learning. This research creates the context for a change in approach to the teaching of language arts to a more process-oriented perspective necessary to realizing the aforementioned objectives. It holds

the potential for becoming the springboard of numerous, related studies, all of which will contribute to our understanding of this knowledge base.

Personally and professionally, I have benefitted from exploring the related literature especially the relationship between the language arts and literacy development and curriculum planning and design. As well, benefits may be derived from surveying the literature on teacher professional development as it specifically relates to language arts education and program development. I have enhanced my knowledge of these areas in preparation for my new post as teacher educator when I return to the island after completion of my studies.

As Allington (1995) declares, the days of the "quick fix" are gone; so too are the days of hiring a foreign consultant whose expertise in instruction, while appropriate, left a lot to be desired in terms of knowledge of the culture, and the interplay of culture and instruction as they impact the resolution of local educational problems. This study is an attempt to provide a solution to this predicament. It is an innovation developed by a native - an individual with firsthand knowledge of the island's education system and one who is trained in elementary, secondary and tertiary education. It proposes an elementary language arts framework that will aim to be of high quality, grounded in a consistent philosophy where teachers are given the opportunity to study and reflect on this new way of thinking about their instructional practices. It gives the practitioner voice - empowerment in the design process, especially at the planning phase, rather than only at the delivery phase. For this reason its longevity and success is quite likely to be realized.

This study also gives me voice. It gives me the theoretical grounding needed to convince policy makers that my intended program for elementary language arts instruction is the result of careful thought, backed by sound research and specially designed for the Barbadian context by one who possesses firsthand knowledge of the peculiarities of this context. It affords me the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to the education reform process in my country. It serves as a catalyst and an example, in realizing several of the major reform objectives in their embryonic stages as stated by the government in the "White Paper." I refer to those objectives related to the conceptualization that learning is a continuous, life-long process; that the role of teachers needs re-valuing; and that the capacity

of the government in planning, evaluating and managing educational programs needs enhancing.

Limitations

The findings of this study apply to the Barbadian context as defined in this study - the elementary language arts curriculum and the persons involved in this research. The findings are not generalizable to subject area programs or to persons outside this inquiry.

As researcher and reporter of the findings, I bring to this work my biases in the form of stated theoretical preferences, beliefs and orientation. This is inherent in the qualitative research process. However, despite my bias and expectations, the data speak for themselves and I accept full responsibility as researcher in reporting the data as they are and in interpreting those data in light of my experiences as well as the discoveries as portrayed in the on-going review of literature.

Another limitation, akin to that reported by Cook and Campbell (1979), is the effect of respondent apprehension due to the perceived evaluation of their responses. Although I had no control over the perceptions of the participants, the items on the questionnaires were stated in such a way as to deter any effect of being evaluative. Further, in my introductory meeting and in telephone conversations with those persons who were not able to attend the meeting, I assured them of the non-evaluative nature of the analysis of their responses.

Yet another limitation to this study is that scheduled group meetings with the practitioners in the study were affected by mandatory in-services of which I was not aware. The initial group meeting was planned to establish face-to-face contact, commitment and trust with participants and to distribute the first questionnaire. The second meeting was originally planned to collect the first questionnaire and distribute the language arts framework and final questionnaire. Time constraints made it impossible to reschedule meetings. Consequently, the meetings were poorly attended and the final one had to be cancelled. I had hoped to take field notes of comments and questions from participants at these meetings. As a result of the poor attendance and cancellation of the final meeting, the feedback on the language arts framework was almost exclusively limited to written responses to the questionnaires.

Delimitations

This study focused on 31 participants so as to maintain manageability while ensuring in-depth inquiry into the contributions these persons made to my curriculum design. As a result of the small target population of this study, the findings are limited. I was always cognizant of the need to have a high rate of return in order to have confidence in my interpretations. These delimitations offer the opportunity for achieving this unique and detailed perspective of the responses that were studied.

Definitions of Key Terms used in the Study

Assessment: a planned or unplanned period of time in which teacher or student consciously measures the nature or quality of learning that takes place or has taken place.

Constructivism: a philosophy in which learning is believed to be constructed by the learner through reorganization for concept development and deep understanding.

Curriculum: the total, tentative, dynamic plan of desired, planned, interrelated activities, experiences and outcomes for learners for a specific subject or set of subjects.

Curriculum development: an umbrella term encompassing planning, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum.

English language arts: those activities and language experiences that occur throughout instruction in which communication occurs and meaning is constructed in Standard English by individuals who participate in those social interactions.

Evaluation: interpretation of assessment measures for the purpose of decision-making.

Goal: a declaration in general terms indicating desired outcomes and is closely related to the stated philosophy.

Learning experience/activity: that which students engage in, which alters their physical and mental or cognitive state.

Learning outcome: that which results from understanding or constructing meaning.

Literacy: the ability to discover the rules and principles of discourse and the power to use, and extend those rules to make sense of one's own experiences and understandings.

Objective: a statement indicating what students should be able to do as a result of learning activities engaged in.

Skills: in language arts, refer to the communication skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking and are considered as modes of learning.

Overview of the Study

This study consists of two sections - Phase I: Development and Documentation of an English Language Arts Curriculum Framework for Barbados, based on the research literature and on my knowledge as an educator-researcher of the Barbadian context; and Phase II: Exploratory Feedback on the Language Arts Framework. Phase I encompasses Chapters 2 and 3, while Phase II entails the remaining chapters. More specifically, Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature relevant to the study. Chapter 3 describes a proposed English language arts framework for Barbados, embedded in the related literature. Chapter 4 establishes the study as a descriptive study and justifies a quantitative-qualitative approach to the research problem. It provides descriptions of the methods and procedures employed, during the research exploration. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the major findings of the study. Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of the key understandings, and implications they hold, especially for cooperative curriculum development and practitioner professional development in Barbados. Recommendations for refinement of the proposed language arts framework are made and suggestions for further research arising out of this exploration are noted. Also, personal reflections are included.

PHASE I: DEVELOPMENT AND DOCUMENTATION OF A PROPOSED LANGUAGE ARTS FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter commences Phase I, Development and Documentation of the proposed language arts curriculum framework. In this chapter, themes from the literature related to this research are discussed. In as much as the research that will be presented has not been conducted in the Caribbean, or more specifically in Barbados, there are some important insights that are not situationally specific but do apply to this research study. There are also instances where the research will be speculative when applying it to the Barbadian context, as these research findings are derived from circumstances specific to educational contexts different from those which exist in Barbados.

This chapter is broadly divided into two main sections - "Constructing the Foundation for a New Language Arts Curriculum Design: Theory and Principles" and "The Importance of the English Language Arts."

"Constructing the Foundation for a New Language Arts Curriculum Design: Theory and Principles" describes curriculum theory and principles which guided the deliberations, decisions and design of a proposed new approach to language arts curriculum development for Barbados. It takes into account how specific issues in the research context are likely to affect the proposed new approach and addresses them from the literature.

The second section: "The Importance of the English Language Arts," defines the term "English language arts" and establishes the powerful nature of the English language arts as the basis for students' overall development. It also emphasizes and justifies the need for using children's literature as content in this new approach. As well, it makes a case for developing children as independent learners while attempting to give the reader a comprehensive perspective on the theoretical aspects that have contributed to a conceptualization of a new approach to language arts curriculum.

Constructing the Foundation for a New Curriculum Design: Theory and Principles

Introduction

Pratt (1980) reports that particularly in the seventies, curriculum emerged as an area of study. As a consequence, a wealth of information which validated principles for developing curricula surfaced. This study draws upon this stock of principles for guidance in planning a language arts curriculum framework. One source that pertained specifically to English language arts was Glatthorn's (1980) book "A guide for developing an English curriculum for the eighties." This book proved to be helpful because of its orientation towards developing a "syncretic" curriculum, a synthesis of knowledge of rich content resources, of cognitive development in children, the students' sense of personal relevance, and societal expectations.

Pratt (1980) elaborates by suggesting that we can, as a consequence of the work done in the curriculum field, develop more valid and more effective curricula. He states:

> Much of the curriculum research of the past decade points to the paramount need for design. Time and again logical analysis and empirical experiment have shown that if education is to be effective and creative, all aspects of curricula must be designed with care and with imagination (p. v).

Searches in the literature were not successful in revealing any studies that have documented the planning stages of elementary language arts curriculum development on a national level. The studies that were reported related to program development at the district level, for example Steele and Meredith (1989) and Glatthorn (1980) and at the school level, Ediger (1991a). To a large extent this study is the result of applying guidelines from the literature with "care and imagination" into a tailor-made approach for language arts in elementary schools in Barbados.

The term 'curriculum' means different things to different people. However, of the definitions that pervade the literature only two are of importance here - those of Taba (1962) and Short and Burke (1991). Taba (1962) put forward the idea that curriculum is a "plan for learning" (p. 11). To fully understand the interpretation of the term 'curriculum' in this work and its application to a language arts framework, further elaboration is necessary. Short and Burke (1991, p. 33) explain that:

> A curriculum is a prediction concerning how people learn, what people should be learning, and the contexts that will support that learning. It is an organizational device intended to put the answers to those predictions into operation and to establish a context for the future decisions. A curriculum is a reflection of the curriculum maker's learning theories and their best current understandings of the processes that define various fields of study [language arts in this instance]. It must be metaphorically written in pencil and adjusted in response to the unexpected and the unpredicted. A curriculum always operates in the present by interpreting the past and predicting the future.

This study is most concerned with curriculum planning - that phase of curriculum development that is the thinking phase. During this phase decisions are made and actions taken to create the written plan (Oliva, 1997) by way of curriculum design. The plan of instruction which results in this study is called a curriculum framework and is organized around age clusters. The present method of organization of the language arts syllabus in Barbados is by class level (the equivalent of grade level in the Canadian context). The curriculum plan may be organized around integrative themes, subject fields, students and /or problem solving situations (Beane, 1995; Reinhartz & Beach, 1997; Tanner & Tanner, 1995). Organizing the framework around age clusters allows for greater student mobility and greater teacher flexibility in planning to accommodate children's needs.

Generally, the consensus in the curriculum field is that curriculum planners or developers are the ones who engage in the development process (for example Pratt, 1980). However, in more recent writings, theorists (for example, Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Eisner, 1994 and Glatthorn, 1994) have acknowledged that various persons in society have a stake (Guba & Lincoln,1988) or interest in the education process in general and the curriculum specifically. Advocates of this stakeholder approach encourage the involvement of stakeholders but emphasize that educators should have the final word on any major decisions to be made. It is based on this premise that a new curriculum development model for Barbados is proposed.

The model of curriculum development which has been in place since independence in Barbados in 1966, has been a top-down model. In this model, all major curriculum decisions are made by ministerial staff, after which the teacher is presented with a syllabus to be followed for curriculum implementation. There has been no indication, to my knowledge, as

to whether this method of curriculum development has ever been evaluated. The research literature seems to indicate that this practice of making decisions and filtering them down to the practitioner is incompatible with the principles of democracy as portrayed by Bruner (1960), Carr (1991), Dewey (1916, 1938, 1958), and Kelly, (1995) and with current language arts curriculum development as espoused by Erickson (1995) and Tchudi (1991). The practice of not carrying out systematic curriculum evaluation is also not in keeping with democratic principles.

It is important that the curriculum development process be democratic. That is the rationale for a proposed curriculum development model and the basis of the choice of participants for this study. An important part of decision making in the democratic process is that participants be well informed and that decisions be based on sound research. Effectiveness of this process, in this instance, will become evident as literate children who are independent learners emerge by the end of primary schooling. For these reasons the model depicted in Figure 1 is proposed as being suitable for consideration in the Barbadian context. It is intended initially to be transitionary (Martin, 1991; Goodwyn, 1992) but ultimately to be a model of collaboration among all member groups. Although students are included in the model, they were not included in the study. In the model "Educators" include teachers, principals, teachers' college lecturers and university lecturers. "Curriculum Personnel" include education officers. Ultimately all stakeholder groups, including curriculum specialists and curriculum evaluators, will be included as the model is fully implemented and evaluated.

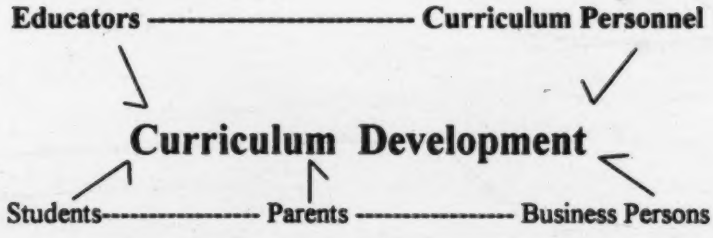

Figure 1. Proposed Curriculum Development Model for Barbados, showing which stakeholders inform a curriculum.

This model responds most directly to the question - Who informs the curriculum? For the purposes of this study, I developed an initial curriculum framework. It was necessary to make the initial phase a unilateral task because I was away from Barbados pursuing doctoral studies in Canada. I had the time to survey the literature and reflect on the various issues inherent to the Barbadian context in order to have a blueprint from which to start enacting the model. It was also a necessary phase for me as researcher and advocate of the new approach to understand the literature and the nature of the project being proposed. It was the first phase in the process of negotiating the change needed to bring about an eventual reduction in the instances of children leaving elementary school incapable of coping at secondary school.

Determining a Philosophy

Educational purposes originate in philosophy. Longstreet and Shane (1993) emphasize not only that we should be clear about the definition of curriculum that we use to guide our work as curriculum designers, but that the curriculum be consistent with the political ideology that our society holds about educational institutions. Since Barbados is a democracy, the democratic principles (Avis et al., 1996) such as equal opportunity for all, respect for the individual right to independent judgment and personal expression, the right to live productively and respectfully with other members of society, are the principles promoted in this new approach to language arts curriculum development.

Meighan (1981, p. 19) lists seven components of an ideology which should concern curriculum planners. These are:-

- A theory of knowledge: its content and structure - what is considered worthwhile or important knowledge, how it is organized (e.g. by subjects or integrated areas) and who shall have access to it.
- A theory of learning and the learner's role - an active or a passive style, doing or listening, cooperative or competitive learning, producing or reproducing knowledge, problem-solving or receiving facts.
- A theory of teaching and the teacher's role - formal to informal, authoritarian or democratic, interest in outcomes or processes, narrow or wide.

- A theory of resources appropriate for learning - firsthand or secondhand.
- A theory of organization of learning situations - criteria for grouping pupils.
- A theory of aims, objectives and outcomes - a view of what is desirable for society, the child, and knowledge.

These components were helpful in deciding the appropriate philosophy for the Barbadian context and the focus for each component. I became aware of the manner in which I wanted to differ from or to adopt the options described. The components also provided a sense as to how the theoretical perspectives manifested themselves in instruction - a relationship which needs to be central to all decision making and deliberating.

The philosophy of the proposed approach for a language arts curriculum framework is influenced by such social forces as high rates of illiteracy amongst school-aged children and rising crime and unemployment rates (Torres, 1990). It is also grounded in the work of these theorists: John Dewey (progressive education), Lev Vygotsky (socio-cultural education), David Armstrong (curriculum theory), Jerome Bruner (cognitive psychology), Elliott Eisner (language and learning), Kenneth Goodman (whole language theory), and John Dixon (personal growth model).

The philosophical position which encompasses the educational beliefs emphasized in this study is constructivism. It is a consequence of my professional journey away from the traditional skills-based ideology and my doctoral studies that guided me to this choice. According to Dewey (1902), progressivism is characterized by the belief that :

> The child is the starting point, the center, and the end. His development and growth, is the ideal. It alone furnishes the standard. To the growth of the child all studies are subservient; they are instruments valued as they serve the needs of growth. Personality, character, is more than subject matter. Not knowledge or information, but self-realization, is the goal. Learning is active. It involves reaching out from the mind. It involves organic assimilation starting from within... It is he and not the subject matter which determines both quality and quantity of learning.
>
> The only significant method is the method of the mind as it reaches out and assimilates (pp. 1-14).

Other characteristics of progressivism, as summarized by Oliva (1997), include:

- Education is not a product to be learned, but is a lifelong process.
- Education promotes individual growth relative to one's ability, not growth in relation to others. Hence cooperation is valued over competition.
- Faith in democracy is central to progressivist thinking.
- Teachers who believe in progressivism think of themselves as facilitators and counselors.

These ideas have influenced the proposed model of curriculum development by ensuring its compatibility with democratic principles. Refer to Table 1 to see how democratic principles are embedded in the constructivist approach. The ideas have also influenced the organization of the curriculum framework into a loosely structured document that allows teachers the kind of flexibility crucial to pupil-centred instruction through catering to the individual differences of students. Constructivism encompasses the views of progressivism but emphasizes the construction or creation of meaning by the individual.

Table 1

Comparison of Philosophical Approaches Based on Brooks and Brooks (1993)

Traditional Approach	Constructivist Approach
Cumulative tradition of organized knowledge.	Knowledge selected from the culture.
Education conceived of as instruction.	Education conceived of as creative self-learning.
Education is imparting knowledge.	Education is developing the whole child.
Experiences are ready-made.	Experiences are first-hand, involving acting, discovering, acquiring meaning and solving real problems.
Learners are taught skills in insolation.	Learners are taught skills in context.
Learners are taught to conform and to accept without question.	Learners are taught to think independently and to question decision making as well as to participate in decision making.
Intellectual development equals good citizenship.	Personal and social growth assist in good citizenship.

Traditional Approach	Constructivist Approach
Curriculum is carefully planned.	Curriculum is planned to allow for flexibility.
Homogeneous grouping, tracking and special grouping promote mastery.	Cooperative learning and flexible grouping encourage all members to achieve their full potential.
Individuals educated to accept their roles in society.	Individuals educated to participate in the change process essential to democracy.
Learners after schooling prepare for work.	Learners practice work attitudes and skills during school.

Characteristics of a Constructivist Approach

Fosnot (1996) concisely describes her interpretation of constructivist principles.

- Constructivism is fundamentally nonpositivist and as such it stands on completely new ground - often in direct opposition to both behaviorism and maturation. Rather than behaviors or skills as the goal of instruction, **concept development** and **deep understanding** are the foci; rather than stages being the result of maturation, they are understood as constructions of learner reorganization (p. 10).

- Learning is not the result of development; **learning is development**...

- **Disequilibrium** facilitates learning...

- **Reflective abstraction** is the driving force of learning...

- Dialogue within a **community** engenders further thinking...

- Learning proceeds toward the **development of structures**... (pp. 29-30) [My highlights]

Developmental psychology originating from the work of Jean Piaget and continuing in the related work of Kohlberg (1987), Elkind (1976), and others have contributed to constructivist philosophy. Traditionally, characteristics of a developmental curriculum are age appropriateness and individual appropriateness (Carr & Harris, 1993). However, the approach taken in this study is based more on individualism as a consequence of social interaction according to Vygotsky (1978, 1986). The curriculum document will be arranged

in age-level blocks, for example, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-11, but is not perceived as bound to stages of only cognitive development. As well, the intended teacher professional development program will be guided by these principles since they apply to language arts education and learning in general for both children and adults (Shanklin & Rhodes, 1989).

Issues Impacting Curricula

As a practitioner taking on the role of curriculum developer, I highlight issues from the literature that are general to curriculum development and specify issues related to practice and specific issues that relate directly to the Barbadian context. Addressing these issues also helps to explain how the new approach differs from the current approach. Enacting both roles provided me with insights that would most likely be overlooked or downplayed should these roles be performed by different individuals. These issues are explored in the following subsections.

Curriculum and Instruction: The Idealized and the Realized

Understanding the relationship of curriculum to instruction is essential to developing a curriculum. This study simply conceives of the curriculum as the content - the plan, program, the learning experiences. Instruction, on the other hand, is the process - the implementation of the content, its presentation, the methods employed, the act of teaching. Curriculum and instruction are therefore different but inherently related - interlocking, interdependent, even symbiotic, or, as suggested by Oliva (1997), cyclic. As one is affected so is the other.

Planning the curriculum should precede instruction (curriculum implementation). Though no-one to my knowledge has reported investigations of this phase of curriculum development in the English language arts over the last two decades, there has been a surge of literature where the general principles of curriculum development have been documented, for example, Doll (1996), Oliva (1997), Pratt (1980, 1994), and Tanner, (1975). However, of the sources located for English language arts, only work by Tchudi (1991) was totally devoted to planning a language arts curriculum.

It was necessary, because of my limited experience in the field of curriculum development, to become familiar with the principles of curriculum development and to use

them in conjunction with Tchudi's work as a means of constructing a suitable document for the Barbadian situation from which to initiate the reform towards a new approach to language arts curriculum development.

An important factor is recognition that curriculum as planned and documented (the idealized curriculum) - is not always the curriculum as implemented (the realized curriculum) (Wiggins, 1995). Hence the need for teacher professional development as a means of increasing the likelihood that the planned curriculum be realized by as many practitioners as possible. For this goal to become a reality, the curriculum planner needs to be clear about the manner in which the elements of the curriculum relate to each other so that they are clearly represented in the written document to reflect their relationship.

The known always provides a good referent for the new. Moving away from a traditionalist perspective means that there are certain terms and ways of representing that needed to be understood if my presentation of the new constructivist perspective as a curriculum document is to be comprehended by its audience. The next three subsections explain traditional curricular-related terms in light of the new approach.

Coherence and Consistency in the Curriculum

Taba (1962) notes that despite their design, most curricula consist of specific components or elements of curriculum - usually, a statement of aims, specific objectives, selected content, an implied or manifested pattern of learning and teaching, and an evaluation of outcomes.

Understanding how the elements of curriculum each contributed to the learning experience in the language arts framework was insufficient. I also needed to understand how these elements impacted the curriculum framework as a whole, in addition to being aware of the need to maintain consistency among them while at the same time promoting coherence. Consistency and coherence are not synonymous.

Consistency refers to a constancy of the principles of the curriculum philosophy, such as the objectives matching the activity (Beane, 1995). Coherence, on the other hand, refers to an obvious, rational relation of components to whole curriculum but between component parts in simultaneous agreement (Beane, 1995). Coherence should be evident in clear

principles for students and teachers and be explicit in syllabi and curricula through the objectives, experiences and assessment procedures. An effort has been made to organize these curricular components in a logical and effective manner for practitioners to observe consistency and coherence in the idealized language arts framework. Hopefully this will become the realized.

Balance, Scope and Sequence

Balance, scope and sequence are common curriculum terms (Armstrong, 1989; Taba, 1962; Tyler, 1949). The issue is not involving their familiarity as much as their interpretation in relation to the new language arts framework.

Balance refers to the need to assure that no one instructional component is emphasized over the others (Armstrong, 1989). In terms of balance, the proposed new approach portrays language arts as an entity. Being holistic in nature, language arts is not perceived as a set of components for which to maintain equal emphasis or focus or for which there is a hierarchy of importance.

Scope, the degree of depth or coverage for a topic or theme (Armstrong, 1989), will be determined by the individual students. Teachers will be utilizing specific strategies which are designed to allow individuals to realize their potential.

As well, sequence, "the decisions about the order in which learners encounter content," (Armstrong, 1989, p. 55) will be determined by the child's developmental level. As each class will consist of individuals at different stages of development, the teacher's task is to operate and instruct within the child's level of development. At the same time, instruction must aim to facilitate the child's growth by providing enough challenge to move the child to a point of achievement which he or she would be incapable of without assistance (Vygotsky, 1978). Consequently, continuity is maintained so that transition from one learning experience to another is without interference (Armstrong, 1989).

Language of Instruction

The expected language of instruction in Barbados is Standard English. To my knowledge this view is not documented but is more understood than legislated, mandated or practiced. By the time they enter school, children without developmental delays have learned

the language used in their home environment (Rake & Canter, 1974 cited in Branch, 1977) which in the Barbadian context, is more likely to be Bajan than Standard English. This means that a large number of Barbadian children enter school without much proficiency in Standard English.

A problem arises when a large number of these students are exposed to teachers who do not model Standard English for them. Is it any surprise that so few children develop acceptable levels of proficiency in Standard English - their second language?

Another aspect of this problem stems from a situation where Standard English is modeled in the classroom, but the child is made to feel that his or her first language is inferior to that of the teacher's (Cummins, 1996). The point of language arts instruction is not to replace the child's language (Sepulveda, 1969) but, as Albert (1974, cited in Branch, 1977) and Vukelich (1973) propose, to accept the child's dialect and move from there (Johnson, 1973 in Branch, 1977) to promote student's flexibility with language (Branch, 1977; Klein, 1981). Adlam (1977) referred to this ability as "code switching" for ease of use of Standard English, thereby extending linguistic competence and performance (Vukelich, 1973).

Loban (1972) is of the view that dialects are a language in their own right (Labov, 1972; Branch, 1977) but differ enough from the standard structure and usage to cause problems in communication and social and personal relationships. Branch (1977) suggests that teachers learn to differentiate between language ability and mental ability, while Loban (1972) suggests that teachers gain sound knowledge, humane values and sensitivity in maintaining students' dignity and positive self image. Teachers should never make children feel ashamed of their dialect but should encourage them to acquire Standard English less they be disadvantaged economically, socially and academically (Bousquet, 1978; Edwards, 1979; Wells, 1986); neither should they convey the idea that acquiring a new language requires the rejection of the previous one (Reynoso, 1987).

There is little research that shows that Black English interferes with learning to read Standard English. What the research shows is that it is teachers' negative attitudes and unrealistic expectations (Goodman & Buck, 1997) that might inhibit instruction by discouraging practices that are more conducive and supportive of Standard English

acquisition. This view is supported by Vukelich (1973) who suggests that is it not a matter of children being deficient in language but that the child experiences difficulty in switching dialects. Unfortunately, the early nineteen seventies' view that children who speak a dialect of English are deficient in language based on some interpretations of studies by Bernstein (1971) and Tough (1976) are still accepted in the Barbadian teaching community. Fortunately, Hughes and Cousins (1990) show that teachers' perceptions about children's language can change.

That teachers understand the major differences between Bajan and Standard English in order to identify and diagnose students' errors (Reynoso, 1987) and provide the support needed to improve their students' linguistic competence should be an important aim. For teacher educators, Roeming (1970) suggests that language instruction be oriented toward, among other factors, student-centred curriculum, development of proficiency in Standard English and concern for basic moral values. As this new attitude is adopted by teachers eventually the change will impact system-wide.

Content in the Curriculum

Yet another issue likely to impact the proposed new language arts curriculum framework is that of content. The current language arts syllabus lists topics to be "covered" and literature is not a component of instruction. There are some culturally-relevant reading schemes being used in some schools with reading materials supplemented by the mobile library. The new approach suggests children's literature as a major source of content rather than basalized texts for a variety of reasons. This issue arises out of the recent trend towards literature-based language arts instruction in the elementary school.

An Increased Teaching Load?

Many Barbadian teachers usually interpret instructional change as an automatic increase in teaching load. This is not the case with the proposed new approach to language arts curriculum development. The new approach is designed to encourage teaching for the transfer of learning. As a consequence, it promotes efficient use of instructional time.

Transfer of learning refers to the ability to effectively use knowledge learned in one situation in a new or different situation (Selz & Ashley, 1978; Perkins, 1992). Tanner and

Tanner (1995) report that research has shown that transfer of learning is not automatic. They emphasize that it must be deliberately built into the written curriculum document whereas, Brooks and Brooks (1993) stress that transfer of learning must be demonstrated and promoted in the classroom for students to engage in its use. The language arts teacher is in an ideal position to achieve this goal being a generalist and the main instructor for the class. The language arts teacher is in a position to encourage children to use the skills and strategies taught in the language arts lessons in other subject areas. Therefore, the work load is not extended. As a matter of fact, it promotes efficiency of learning and instruction.

Failure of the Transmission Model

There is much controversy about the model of teaching in Barbados. Still prevalent is the model of teaching based upon the transmission of knowledge. Several researchers and theoreticians have documented or implicated the failure of this model for a continuing democracy (Eisner, 1981; Graves, 1989; Wells, 1985, 1989). Weaver (1990, p. 46) states:

> The traditional transmission concept of education is not succeeding well in developing students and adults who are literate in the sense of being able to read, write, and think critically - much less in developing citizens who through literacy can participate fully in the economic, political, social and cultural worlds available to the literate.

One of these "worlds" is the world of work.

Since the industrial revolution, education has been influenced by the literacy demands of the workplace and the abilities of employees to meet them (Mikulecky, 1988). More recently, the technological revolution has resulted in a change in the nature of jobs, making reading, writing and other communication skills vital to job performance (Business Council for Effective Literacy, 1988; Pope, 1993).

Mikulecky (1988) reports that literacy demands in the workplace in North America appear to be increasing in quantity and complexity and that research reveals that literacy skills are at a relatively high level and are ubiquitous. He implies that schools should be increasing the amount of time students spend engaging in reading and writing, using these skills for completing tasks oriented to solving problems (Mikulecky, 1984).

In the early 1990s, The National Governors' Association in the United States produced a booklet with ten American states that met the challenge of preparing students for the workforce (Northern Central Indiana Workforce Literacy Task Force, 1992). In 1992, the North Central Indiana Workforce Literacy Task Force presented a report which identified six key changes in the workplace of the future. These are :

- employers will require higher-level skills;
- educational systems must provide job and life skills;
- competencies must extend beyond basic skills;
- schools should provide employability skills to graduates;
- learners should connect school and "real world' experiences; and
- employers must value high performance and quality management (Northern Central Indiana Workforce Literacy Task Force, 1992).

Based on a survey as reported in this report, seven minimal entry-level requirements were listed and included:

- resources - time, money, materials or facilities and human resources;
- information - acquires or evaluates, organizes or maintains, interprets or communicates, and processes;
- interpersonal skills;
- systems;
- technology;
- learning to learn; and
- math/computation (Northern Central Indiana Workforce Literacy Task Force 1992).

Although this research is coming out of the United States - a developed country - it is relevant in the Barbadian context since Barbados is recognized by the Organization of American States as no longer having Third World status. Within a decade these concerns are likely to be true for the island. Also, developing a curriculum in the present must anticipate future trends and accommodate such changes. Therefore, a new approach to curriculum development must make provision for all the process-oriented factors that impact the

workforce such as information management, interpersonal skills and for learning to learn, as these are generic and life-lasting.

Theoretical Perspectives on the English Language Arts

This subsection sets forth the theoretical background from which the guidelines of the language arts framework in this research study have been constructed. Aspects such as what is meant by the term 'English language arts', and the relationship between language arts and other related constructs are described as a means of providing a theoretical rationale for making specific curricular decisions pertaining to the language arts document developed for this research study.

Defining the English Language Arts

Prior to the 1960s, language arts was defined as content, that is literature, language and composition; or as skills or "arts" such as reading, writing, listening and speaking (Moffett, 1968). More recently, it is defined as the collective components of reading, spelling, grammar, handwriting, poetry and the communication skills of writing, speaking and listening (Reinhartz & Beach, 1997). In Barbadian schools today these are the components on the language arts syllabus. There is no mention of literature. Eisner (1981) however expresses a slightly different perception of the English language arts that elaborates on the communication skills stated in the latter definition by adding what he calls "forms of representation." These forms of representation include poetry, drama, art, music, dance and literary text and have influenced the kinds of activities and experiences that appear in the language arts document.

Historically, language arts instruction focused on the isolation of the language arts components so that mastery of a skill or component could be achieved. This mastery was attained by regular practice through the use of worksheets, workbooks, exercises out of textbooks and copy exercises (Templeton, 1997). This led to an over-emphasis on the correctness of the language product (Lane,1972) rather than an emphasis on showing the relationship between knowing a skill and when and why to use the skill (Templeton, 1997).

In this study, the language arts are not perceived as components or separate entities. Rather, language arts refers to those activities and language experiences that occur

throughout instruction in which communication occurs and meaning is constructed by the individuals who participate in those social interactions. The very nature of the English language arts demonstrates its wholeness and its relation to literacy. Emphasizing integration in the English Arts (Schaff, 1973) cannot be stressed enough.

A description of the conceptualization of English language arts for which this research study aims, is provided in Tchudi (1991) as a Personal Growth Model (John Dixon, 1979). The personal growth model according to Tchudi (1991, p.12):

- looks to the students' language as the starting point for instruction;
- allows for natural progression of language skill development instead of prescribed sequences;
- builds skills developmentally, meshing instruction with students' cognitive and linguistic growth;
- organically connects language and literature;
- integrates the various components of language arts - reading, writing, listening, and speaking;
- uses youngsters' own experiences with life as the entry point for reading and writing; treats language as a whole, rather than dividing instruction into discrete skill components.

The personal growth model suggested by Tchudi (1991) appears in the literature in different guises. These include: 'new English language arts,''student-centred,' 'naturalistic,' 'developmental,' 'organic,' 'integrated,' 'language experience' or more recently 'whole language.' As Schaff (1973, p. 118) emphasizes:

> integration is so perfect and interdependence so precise that neither element can ever occur independently, in a "pure" form. That is precisely why the functions of thinking and language may not be treated separately...

Language arts instruction, based on the personal growth model, depends upon teachers who understand its complexities and can translate these into classroom practice that facilitates language growth for each individual in the classroom. The view presented here, has implications for the experiences, and professional literature to which teachers will be exposed in their professional development.

Language Arts and Forms of Representation

Forms of representation assist in conceptual development, communication and expression (Eisner, 1985) and are crucial to language arts instruction. Eisner (1994) argues that each form of representation possesses "its own parameters of possibility for the construction and recovery of meaning" (p. 88), in other words its own "syntax". He expresses the view that:

> At present, schools neglect the development of literacy in many of the forms of representation that are available in the culture. This neglect denies children access to meanings that are specific to particular forms and adversely affects the kinds of meanings they can express in the forms that they are taught in schools (Eisner, 1981, p. 469).

It is the task of educators to determine the ways in which young children come to know the world, to facilitate the kind of sense they create from it, to determine the kinds of classifications, attitudes, and meaning that they obtain from their experience (Eisner, 1981). Children interpret meaning from each form through their senses and each form of representation can be subjected to different "modes of treatment" - essentially a conventional mode equivalent to a product focus and a less conventional process orientation. He suggests that knowing these modes of treatment means knowing the possibilities each possesses for the representation of meaning. Eisner (1981) argues that children use the senses as tools for articulating thought (conceptualizing, expressing and recovering meaning) and this ability is legitimately a form of literacy which is expressed through "forms of representation."

In essence, forms of representation are constituents of literacy and contribute to the development of mind in the realization of consciousness (Bruner, 1984). Imaginative perception and perceptive imagination are unique human capabilities. Democratically, it is essential that these be developed in all members of the school population as part of the educational experience (Broudy, 1977, cited in Hersom, 1986).

When teachers share this trend of thought, this knowledge is likely to influence the experiences in which they engage their students. As Schaff (1973) declares:

> When we adopt the monistic standpoint, we reject the claim that language and thinking can exist separately and independently of one another. Thus we assert that in the process of cognition and communication, thinking and using

a language are inseparable elements of one and the same whole (p.118).

Language Arts and Language Acquisition and Concept Development

"The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows" (Ausubel, 1978, p. iv), that is the learner's knowledge gained from previous experiences. Children acquire language and develop their knowledge of language long before they enter school (Kantor, Miller & Fernie, 1992; Wells, 1986; Teale & Sulzby, 1986). This language development occurs as a holistic, unified and complex process requiring much more than imitation of speech. Children actively construct their own language development (Goodman & Goodman, 1981) but they cannot achieve this feat completely on their own. They need the assistance of a more competent language user (Wells, 1986) in order to become successful with language.

Schema theory (Rumelhart, 1980) as interpreted by Thorndyke (1981) is based upon the supposed "existence of knowledge and memory structures that encode prototypical descriptions of familiar concepts" (Abstract of Thorndyke, 1981). It is one theory that explains the need for a more knowledgeable person to assist children with language (Richgels, 1982). Therefore the language arts teacher must be a competent user of Standard English. The more children use language in the presence of a competent user, the more developed their schemata become and the more competent they become as language users by developing and refining concepts and by understanding the relationship of one concept with the other. Concept development (Erickson, 1998) in Standard English is a key purpose of language arts instruction.

Lev Vygotsky elaborated on the nature of the interaction between the child and "competent other" as the basis of his sociocultural theory and maintained that language is initially a product of society before it becomes the product of the individual. The child's language proficiency is the consequence of the scaffolding (Wood & Middleton, 1975; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) and mediation (Feuerstein, 1988) which the competent language user provides for the young child through interaction. In Vygotskian terms the competent language user interacts with the child in his or her "zone of proximal development" in such a way as to guide that child to a level of operating which is challenging and attainable but

which he or she is incapable of without that kind of interaction. The role of the teacher when interacting in the child's zone of proximal development is facilitator or mediator and relies on sound content knowledge.

"Learning can diminish the mind as well as expand it" (Eisner, 1982, p. 13). Teachers who are aware of the relationship between language and learning are more likely to provide their students with opportunities for growth that assist them in making meaning and expanding their minds. These teachers will provide the necessary support or scaffolding (Berk & Winsler, 1995) by modeling questioning, and providing informative comments and feedback which guide their students to a stage where they can operate independently (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983 in Pearson, 1985). Being cognizant of a student's zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) allows the teacher to optimize instruction by helping that student to realize his or her potential thereby expanding that child's mind.

Eisner (1982) explains that we are able to conceive of what we have never experienced in the physical dimension through imagination. Concept formation depends upon the construction of images derived from the physical through the senses. The transactions and reciprocations which occur between the environment and the individual's cognitive structures or schemata help children to make sense and meaning of their worlds. Language helps us to represent what we have experienced and what we have imagined. Therefore language acquisition and concept development are dynamic, parallel processes that enhance learning. "Learning how to represent what we have experienced is a primary means for contributing to the expanded consciousness of others" (Eisner, 1982, p. 35), and, by reciprocation, ourselves. He suggests that meaningful programs are those that promote the possibilities of the human mind. Such programs assist children in realizing these possibilities. Therefore the language arts approach proposed in this study will aim for the expansion of minds.

Language Arts and Literacy

Literacy, like curriculum, is another term that means different things to different people. For this study, literacy is perceived as encompassing more than being able to read and write (Eisner, 1981; McLane & McNamee, 1990; Meek, 1982; Meek & Mills, 1988; Narain, 1974). Freire and Macedo (1987, p. 10) elaborate:

> Literacy is best understood as a myriad of discursive forms and cultural competencies that construct and make available the curious relations and experiences that exist between learners and the world.

This definition highlights the constructive nature of the relationship between the learner and the world as already emphasized in the characteristics of constructivist philosophy.

Literacy is inherent in the language arts and its very roots are found in language development. Language acquisition and literacy development affect performance in language arts. They are interrelated and are influenced by social interaction (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984). They are also ongoing, lifelong processes - unfolding, so to speak. Perceiving literacy as an ongoing process which develops with time and social interaction has helped researchers to categorize literacy development as two distinct phases. The initial phase is referred to as emergent literacy (Clay, 1991; Hall, 1987; Meek,1982, 1991; Sulzby, 1991; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Wray, Bloom & Hall, 1989) and is characterized by evidence of pre-conventional forms of reading and writing behaviours. These behaviours are evident in the early stages of the child's development usually from infancy to around age eight or nine (Sulzby, 1991; Edwards & Malicky, 1996). In the second phase children internalize initial processes and produce literacy behaviours to a high degree of conventionality.

The research shows that on entering school, some children are found to possess much book knowledge (Ferrerio & Teberosky, 1982; Goodman & Goodman, 1981; Wells, 1986). In some cases children are readers and exhibit writing knowledge as well (Clay, 1991). Recognizing that some children are already readers on entry to school has resulted in acknowledging the vital and powerful role of parents in emergent literacy (Hall, 1987; Hannon, 1990a,1995; Hannon & James, 1990; Holdaway, 1979).

In addition, the potential of the interaction between children and adults has been extensively researched and the relation to effective cognitive development established by Lev Vygotsky and others, (see Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Halliday, 1973, 1975 and Tough 1973, 1976, 1977). Acquiring literacy is a sociolinguistic event that allows its user to communicate and further learn (DeBeaugrande, 1980; Halliday 1973, 1974, 1978; Holdaway 1979; Smith 1978, 1983). By extension, the work of these researchers implies that teaching language arts as separate subjects, such as English language and English literature, or as components of the

same subject, is to the detriment of the student.

Eisner (1981, 1994) provides another perspective on literacy. Being literate, according to his view, "means being able to use a variety of forms of representation for conceptualizing, expressing, and recovering meaning" (Eisner , 1981, p. 469), since each form of representation uses a different syntax or way of arranging its patterned forms. These forms distinguish each from the other. This way of perceiving literacy through the language arts is very natural for children especially in the elementary school.

A new approach to language arts which makes provision for children to develop literacy as described should benefit all children. Traditionally, teachers approached literature as "reading" and as if it consisted of two distinct experiences. One experience was concerned with reading for pleasure (Nodelman, 1996), fantasy and communication and the other, with gaining new knowledge, gathering facts and classifying. In Barbados, it is uncommon to find a language arts classroom with a predominance of the first type of experience. Most teachers use reading materials in an efferent manner (Rosenblatt, 1978). The approach proposed here is one in which literature is presented through one unified experience that results in pleasurable learning (Fox, 1995).

Theorists and researchers have directly related literature to a range of values, such as: thinking (Brown, 1971; Meek, 1982); stages of life as in initiation ceremonies experienced during childhood through to the responsibilities of adulthood (mythologist, Joseph Campbell as quoted in Cooper, 1990); and the development of self and social awareness, (Cullingford, 1998; Goodwyn, 1992). Values directly related to instruction are as follows:

- "Literature is able to connect curriculum naturally, modeling vivid writing styles while depicting time, place, people, or scientific facts" (Geiger, 1995, p. 38).

- "Literature fosters the kind of imagination needed in a democracy - the ability to participate in the needs and aspirations of other personalities and to envision the effect of our actions on their lives" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p.212).

- "Good literature offers many rewards to readers: knowledge, pleasure, heightened awareness of self and others, deeper appreciation of the world and its visual and cultural treasures, the opportunity for

armchair travel, a nurturing of the imagination, an aid to the development of a moral sense, and a greater understanding of what it means to be human" (Rudman, 1989, p. 177).

- "Literature is the thread that can unite the subject areas and become an integral part of the learner's life, both in school and outside the formal school situation" (Guth, 1995, p. 74).

- "Literature is a mirror of the world " (Hearne, 1990, p. 155).

- "It has high educational value ... It is a stimulus for language acquisition ... It develops interpretative abilities; students enjoy it and it is fun; it is highly valued and has high status; it expands students' language awareness; it encourages students to talk about their opinions and feelings" (Lazar, 1993, pp. 14-15).

- "Literature acts as one of the agencies in our culture that transmit images of behavior, emotional attitudes clustering about different social relationships, and social and personal standards (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 212).

- Literature can reveal ... the diversity of possible ways of life, patterns of relationship, and philosophies from which he [the child] is free to choose in a heterogeneous, rapidly changing democratic society (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 212).

- Literary experiences may enable the reader to view his [or her] own personality and problems objectively and so to handle them better (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 212).

- Literature may help [the child] make sound choices through imaginative trial and error or experimentation - through experiencing in the literary work the consequences of alternative actions (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 212).

- Literature may suggest socially beneficial channels for drives that might otherwise find expression in antisocial behavior" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 212).

It is not enough to state that children's literature will provide the content for the language arts framework. Three related issues must be treated here. The first is the theory which explains the focus on children's literature. The second is the teacher's prerequisite

literary knowledge and the third is knowledge for selecting quality literature.

Children's Literature: A Theoretical Basis

This section exemplifies Meighan's (1981) component theory of knowledge, theory of teaching and the teacher's role and the theory of resources appropriate to firsthand learning. These theories have been subdivided into two categories. The first is the theoretical perspective and the second is the practical or instructional perspective - how the theory applies in the class setting as activities. A teacher's theoretical approach determines the teacher's instructional practices in the classroom setting - the nature of interaction, the kinds and levels of questions asked and the type of activities in which the class engages.

Rosenblatt (1978) and Rumelhart (1977) each propose a theoretical perspective that is collectively compatible with the constructivist view of learning and is therefore appropriate to the new approach proposed here. Rumelhart (1977) projects reading as a process from the position of the reader, as consisting of six levels - features, letters, letter clusters, lexical, syntactic and semantic characteristics of written language. The reader is thought to flick back and forth across levels at various speeds when reading text. A closer look at these levels conveys a progression of increasing complexity. This progression corresponds to the levels of thought as indicated in Bloom's (1956) taxonomy. Therefore, it would be pertinent to engage children in all levels of thinking as this is useful in constructing meaning. Reading as proposed in the interactive approach is presented as a cognitive process and meaning is thought to be constructed from the interaction between the reader and the text

The next perspective relates more specifically to the nature of this interaction. Rosenblatt (1978) suggests that in transactional theory readers are perceived as bringing their own experiences and knowledge of the world and of language as a means of interacting or transacting with the information in the text to construct meaning. Figure 2, p. 36, illustrates what I call the interactive-transactional perspective.

In this interactive-transactive view, any reading event occurs somewhere on the efferent-aesthetic continuum (Rosenblatt, 1978) which is determined by the readers's purpose for reading. The term "efferent" connotes "extraction or taking away." When a reader is in this stance or "mental set" s/he focuses attention on what information is to be taken away at

the end of the reading act. "Aesthetic," on the other hand, connotes "perception" or sensibility. During reading, the words in their specific arrangement (local coherence) stimulate memory components and activate zones of consciousness - past experiences, language knowledge, world knowledge, schema, anticipated outcomes or predictions and the like to create meaning." If the message conveyed by the words do not match these frameworks then revision of the text is likely. Each revisit or re-reading realizes new possibilities of the transaction and new meaning is created.

Clearly, this view goes beyond the cognitive and includes the affective domain as the reader creates meaning - the poem - from the text. This new way of perceiving how the reader constructs meaning has strong implications for the types of activities the teacher promotes in the classroom as well as the manner in which the teacher approaches the act of teaching language arts with literature as a focus.

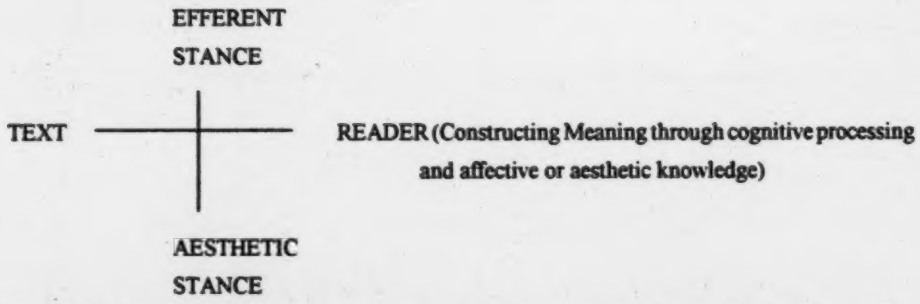

Figure 2. Interactive-transactional theoretical perspective: Indicating the reader constructing meaning along the efferent-aesthetic continuum through interaction with the text.

Teacher's Literary Knowledge

Practitioners should have a good understanding of the various genres (the various classifications of literary work) and their characteristics (Fisher & Terry, 1990; Norton, 1989). They must know, for example, what the characteristics of narrative are, as opposed to exposition (at the macro-level), and for example, what qualifies as poetry as opposed to biography, ballad, myth, legend and the like (on the micro-level). Knowing the literary

techniques used in the various genres are also important. Only if teachers are aware of these characteristics can they provide the kind of instruction necessary for children to make meaning from literature and express their understandings using literary techniques (Bosma & Guth, 1995; Freeman & Person, 1992).

Book selection is significant to both teacher and student. The teacher must be clear as to the criteria necessary for effective selection of quality literature (Cole, 1998) as these books become a "working collection" (Heeks, 1981). A comprehensive list of selection criteria are recommended by Geiger (1995), Heeks (1981, p. 116) and Huck et al. (1987). The teacher or teacher educator is expected to devote a whole-class lesson to the art and method of book selection during which he or she must establish what skills the students already possess in this area (Rudman, 1989). One technique for children to use in selecting their own books is suggested by Jeanette Veatch (described in Rudman, 1989, p. 190).

Language Arts and Cognition

Language is defined in several ways, but a degree of commonality is evident in the definitions. Most definitions imply that language:

- is a system of communication by use of sound symbols;
- is non-instinctive; and
- is a purely human characteristic.

One definition which was particularly pertinent to the perception of language as implied in the term 'language arts', is that stated by Herskovits (1948 as cited in McDavid, Jr., 1980): "language is a system of arbitrary vocal signals by which members of a social group cooperate and interact, and by means of which the learning process is effectuated and a given way of life achieves both continuity and change" (p. 278).

Language enables us to think - to construct meaning (which is how we learn) to cope with abstract ideas and to express our own ideas, emotions and desires (Sapir, 1968). It establishes meaning to everything and to every experience. Language and thought are essential to our very being. Vygotsky (1986, p. 218) reports Tolstoy as stating in 1903 that "the relation of word to thought, and the creation of new concepts is a complex, delicate, and enigmatic process unfolding in our soul." Vygotsky (1986) elaborated:

> The relationship of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought. In that process, the relation of thought to word undergoes changes that themselves may be regarded as development in the functional sense. Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them. Every thought tends to connect something with something else, to establish a relation between things. Every thought moves, grows and develops, fulfills a function, solves a problem. This flow of thought occurs as an inner movement through a series of planes (p. 218).

If we accept the above, that all knowledge is connected, then thought and language are inseparable (Schaff, 1973). The processes of cognition or thought, language, and communication are one and the same whole - mind. Language arts is one subject which consciously brings these processes together as a whole. Demonstrating these connections is a major part of effective language arts teaching. Assisting learners in recognizing when these processes are not achieving meaning is also part of effective language arts teaching. Being able to monitor and regulate one's meaning making is a key factor in independent learning (Orman & Tei, 1983; Zimmerman, 1986). A constructivist approach to language arts instruction realizes these relationships and equips the student with strategies for learning.

Language Arts and the Learner

It has been argued that one of the purposes of education in a democracy is to develop independent, lifelong learners (Dearden, 1972 Downey, 1960). It has also been argued that language arts is the kernel for all other subjects in the curriculum.

> Because language is closely linked to the process and product of thought, it serves to mediate virtually all learning. For this reason, the importance of the development of language and literacy in children is considered the first and most fundamental responsibility of the school (Strickland in Foreword of Taylor, 1983).

If these are acceptable positions, then an important part of language arts instruction is teaching children how to acquire and make sense of knowledge - in essence, how to learn.

Instruction which encourages or promotes metacognition (Baker & Brown, 1980, 1984; Brown, 1980; Metcalfe & Shimamura, 1994), self-verbalization (Feitler & Hellekson, 1993; Glasser, 1993; Schunk & Rice, 1984), critical thinking (Dixson, 1991; Gardner, 1992) and self-assessment (Bailey, 1979; Boud, 1988; Boud & Lublin, 1983) can be beneficial to

all students especially when one considers that for most students they are learned skills which require guidance, support and engagement. Glasser (1993) explains, when a person can verbally explain information to another successfully, that person has understood 95% of that information. By implication, acquisition of these former skills should empower children to learn independently.

Learning How to Learn

Learning the language arts and learning how to learn (Novak & Gowing, 1984) result in very different kinds of knowledge (Moffett, 1968). Learning the language arts provides one with knowledge basic to understanding or creating meaning, but learning how to learn provides knowledge that assists the learner in acquiring and organizing information efficiently through the use of effective strategies. These strategies would include graphic organizers (Ausubel, 1978) that make use of knowledge of text patterns (Horowitz, 1985a, 1985b) or text organizations (Brooks & Dansereau, 1983), local and global coherence (Halliday & Hasan, 1976); and mapping (Buckley & Boyle, 1983; Sinatra, Stahl-Gemake & Morgan, 1986). The literature presented here suggests that the two should not be separated. Their integration is crucial to fulfilling the aim of developing independent learners. To be both successful language users and successful students we (students and their teachers) must engage in critical thinking (Heath, cited in Harste, 1989). "Linguists, for example, tell us that meaning is what language is all about" (Harste, 1989, p. 15). A new approach to language for a democratic society should be designed with objectives for engaging children in critical thinking as it is a life skill in a democracy.

A crucial part of learning how to learn - constructing meaning - is the ability of students to engage in self-evaluation (Coll & Martin, 1996). It is also an essential feature of learner autonomy. Self-assessment is the ability to monitor and make judgements about one's learning strategies and achievements (Bailey, 1979; Marzano, 1992; Pollard, 1997; Stipek et al., 1992; Wishon et al., 1998).

The related literature indicates a predominance of research involving post secondary students (Baird & White, 1982; Boud, 1988, 1991, 1992 1995; Boud & Falchikov, 1989; Boud & Lublin, 1982). However, there is a minuscule number of studies involving primary

school children with very encouraging results (Bailey, 1979; Stipek et al., 1992; Towler & Broadfoot, 1992). Stipek et al., (1992) contend that:

> self-evaluation is undoubtedly one of the most important milestones in children's development. Children's evaluations of their competencies and behavior affect their emotional experiences in particular situations, their behavior in similar situations in the future, and their emotional well-being in the long term (p. 1).

Towler and Broadfoot (1992) emphasize that self-assessment allows students to use language strategies for making sense of new experiences in relation to prior experiences. This feature is inherent in situations where students are encouraged to take responsibility for their thinking and learning. One important finding from their study was supported in this statement by Munby (1989).

> Crucially, students will need help and support in developing the skills of self-assessment and personal recording and in learning to cope with the freedom and responsibility involved in evaluating their own achievements and communicating their opinions and experiences to others (p. 83 cited in Towler & Broadfoot, 1992).

A more recent trend in primary curriculum literature is the promotion of student self-assessment as essential to meaning construction for learners (Leaker, 1991 in Bouffler, 1993; Pollard, 1997; Wishon et al., 1998).

Summary

Phase I of the study started with this chapter. This chapter defined the term 'curriculum' as flexible plan - a prediction of how children learn, what they should be learning, activities that promote such learning, and the kinds of contexts that will support these activities. It explored the notion of cooperative curriculum development with the recognition that both the school population and the general public have a stake in the education of the youth - the future society. In addition, a proposed new curriculum development model, based on the foregoing, and one that is more suitable to a democracy, is described. Anticipated issues associated with a shift from the traditional paradigm to a constructivist philosophy have been described as a basis for giving credence to the argument that a constructivist approach is more appropriate for the Barbadian context. These include the use of children's literature as the content of the language arts framework. This section

ends with a detailed description of the characteristics of constructivism as interpreted in this study.

Part two of the chapter explains several theoretical perspectives that are integrated into conceptualizing and defining English language arts as an entity which utilizes language for constructing and expressing meaning through thought. Children's literature is justified as a valuable content source for children's meaning construction. Language arts is highlighted as language-based instruction, in this instance, Standard English, which promotes independent thought and learning through social interaction. A strong emphasis is placed on language arts as the foundation on which all further education and life skills develop. Self-assessment is highlighted as an important part of skill development for life-long learning and self-autonomy.

CHAPTER 3

THE LANGUAGE ARTS FRAMEWORK

Introduction

A necessary prerequisite to the kind of educational change as described in the White Paper, and specific to language arts instruction, is a written document, a tangible medium representing the conceptual change that is targeted. The document produced as a consequence of reading and interpreting theoretical and research viewpoints is a blueprint (Wiggins, 1995). It is the starting point from an informed and educated database. It is subject to change, by being altered within the parameters of research and philosophy at the theoretical level, and the constraints of resources and infrastructure at the practical and realized level. It is my duty as researcher and advocate of this approach to inform the reader as to the content and process on which this new approach to language arts is based. It is also my responsibility to be open and receptive to the comments of those persons who respond to this work, especially the stakeholders, but particularly practitioner-oriented stakeholders, as they provide technical criticism and feedback.

This chapter addresses the first research question: "What is the nature of an elementary English language arts curriculum framework designed for the Barbadian context, and based on current research and theory?" It describes the structural components of the proposed language arts framework for the Barbadian context, based on the research literature on language learning and development and curriculum development. The chapter also describes the structural components of the proposed framework by comparing the latter with the current language arts syllabus. The framework is grounded in the constructivist view of the learner. The major tenets of such a view were discussed in Chapter 2. These principles emphasize learners as individuals who acquire language by constructing meaning for themselves and acknowledge that the learner produces language that functions for real purposes (Halliday, 1975). Refer to Appendix B (p. 199) for the entire language arts document.

The framework is deliberately presented to reflect and encourage flexibility for instructional planning rather than a prescribed format. The objectives are explicitly repetitive

to reflect the learner's development and to encompass the concept of Jerome Bruner's spiral curriculum as described by Hook, in O'Donnell (1967, p. 11). It "covers much of the same ground, again at steadily higher levels" while broadening its scope. This approach to the content complements the developmental approach for the learner.

The categories for this framework were fashioned after the structure of the language arts program presented in Goodman, Hood and Goodman (1991). These authors have redesigned the traditional curriculum guide to create a document which includes a "Policy Statement" or program objective with a rationale and an inspirational quotation from Francois Mauriau. The first component is called "Policy Statement Objectives: The Core Curriculum" arranged as four groups, namely, K-2; 3-5; 6-8 and 9-12. The second component is "Suggested Learning Experiences/Events." The third component is "Assessment Opportunities" and is followed by "Intervention Possibilities." Each of these components lists appropriate items for each of the four age groups. The terminology was changed to include terms more familiar to the Barbadians so that when participants responded to the Language Arts Framework questionnaire I could be reasonably certain that common referents were being accessed for comment. For example, the term *objectives* was used instead of the term *outcomes* because this is the term generally used in professional development and the one with which most Barbadians are familiar.

The philosophical statement was made explicit (Erickson, 1995) so that all respondents could access the theoretical underpinnings of the program. Age groups were used because they are readily understandable as opposed to grade levels and class levels which may be confusing for readers.

For each of the following sections of this chapter, the related literature is presented as a rationale for the inclusion of each component in the proposed document. Each rationale is accompanied by its complementary component of the actual language arts framework, presented in smaller print and single spacing to distinguish it from the surrounding text.

The Philosophical Statement

In recent times, the statement of philosophy has been realized as a valuable element of the curriculum (Carr & Harris, 1993; Erickson, 1995; Stevenson, 1995; Tchudi, 1991).

The philosophical statement is defined as "a clear, brief statement about the purpose and nature of the curriculum for a particular area of study" (Carr & Harris, 1993, p. 105). The statement should include beliefs about the purpose of education, teaching, the learner and society (Oliva, 1992; Tanner & Tanner, 1995). As this is a novel component to Barbadian curriculum, a comprehensive statement was decided upon as follows:

> It is the mission of all language arts teachers to prepare all children to become lifelong thinkers and learners. As language arts teachers, we believe language learning is a natural, active, social, and flexible process. Language learning is on-going and positive, providing skills and strategies necessary to become life-long learners and effective, contributing members of society.
>
> Language learning, the main goal of the English language arts, is a communication process encompassing the tools of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking as they support and enhance each other. It is a natural, meaningful, purposeful process and must be experienced. One learns language by using language; one learns to write by writing, one learns to read by reading. Language learning, being a natural process, is dynamic, allowing for a variety of educational approaches and purposeful strategies that are contextual and experiential and should be incorporated across the curriculum. Being meaningful and purposeful, language learning involves the synthesis and application of new ideas and concepts gleaned from a rich selection of literature, other media and personal experience.
>
> As a natural process, built upon previous experience and knowledge, effective language skills enable children to assimilate new information and communicate new ideas with others. Language arts teachers also recognize the important role of parenting in the early development of language and learning. Therefore, parents are seen as an integral part of their children's basic education. It is through parental modeling that children first develop language skills and attitudes throughout their lives.
>
> Consequently, language arts teachers believe language learning is a continuing cooperative effort between home, school, and community. Children have a natural curiosity and eagerness to learn. They explore their world and share their learning with each other and significant others.
>
> The school environment should be rich in literature, language and communication where discussion with teachers and peers is an expected part of the learning process and where discussion is a two-way exchange of ideas. Classrooms and staff must provide children with equality of opportunity to share their learning experiences with one and another and with their community.
>
> Language learning is child-centred and based upon the belief that all children must experience success. Successful children build upon a solid foundation of positive self-regard and worth. Further, children become competent, confident readers,

writers and thinkers, when they work in a secure environment. The language arts program must, therefore, promote the development of children's positive self-image allowing for freedom to make choices, take risks, make mistakes, and take ownership of their own learning is a supportive setting.

Successful delivery of an integrated, comprehensive language arts program requires cooperation and coordination between university, teacher educators, school administrators and teaching staff. To be effective, teachers must receive adequate resources as well as timely and appropriate in-servicing to update, refine, or develop new teaching skills. Teachers must also have the freedom to make choices from a variety of effective teaching strategies and be provided with opportunities for in-school sharing of ideas. To facilitate provision of an integrated language arts curriculum framework, teacher-support networks are encouraged to develop collegial support and generate the free flow of ideas.

Assessment is a natural, non-threatening, and important part of the educational process. It serves as an effective method of communicating children's progress and performance to parents and community. Assessment in language arts is an on-going process and provides a means for determining the individual needs of children.

Moreover, language arts assessment should be viewed as a tool for improving students' language learning. It should be strategy-oriented and innovative, focusing upon the processes more so than upon the products of learning. Furthermore, language arts assessment should be both formal and informal and should emphasize observation of student growth. Language arts assessment should also reflect the instructional goals of the nation and be driven by the outcomes in the language arts curriculum framework.

To be successful in life and contribute to society, children must be connected to each other and their community. This language arts framework serves to actively connect children with new knowledge, each other and the community. Through the integration of meaningful reading, writing, speaking, and listening experiences, students' learning is connected to their world and they become life-long thinkers and learners.

The Program Goals

Armstrong (1989, p. 20) explains that curriculum specialists develop generalized orientations to curriculum development based on "personal responses to information about content, reactions to philosophical alternatives, thoughts about learning theory, and considerations of direct and indirect constraints on their freedom to make decisions." These factors all affect the aims of education that will ultimately be stated in a language arts document and can be linked to one of four major groups under which these specialists may be categorized. These are academic orientation, technological orientation, personal

orientation and social orientation.

The orientation of interest here is personal orientation because it complements and is consistent with the ideas expressed in the philosophical statement. A curriculum developer working from a personal orientation will explore topics related to child development and advocate learning as "development." The language arts framework must reflect this orientation throughout the document.

Collectively, the criteria for creating quality aims derived from Dewey (1916) and Pratt (1980) and were useful in answering the question "What educational purposes should the language arts program seek to attain?" These criteria are:

1. The aim set up must be an outgrowth of existing conditions.
2. The act of realizing it tests its worth.
3. The aim must always represent a freeing of activities [a doing with things to achieve an end] (Dewey, 1916, pp. 104-105) [my addition]

Pratt (1980, p. 147) elaborates on these criteria and provides a different perspective by suggesting six criteria to apply to aims:

1. Specify an intention
2. Identify a significant intended change in the learner
3. Be concise
4. Be exact
5. Be complete
6. Be acceptable

The educational philosophy, in this case, constructivism, coupled with principles of democracy provide a strong sense of educational purpose and give rise to the following aims of education. These are to develop learners who:-

- Function independently and as intellectuals.
- Function as productive citizens.
- Grow as individuals.
- Are actual or potential workers.

These aims focus on the potentialities of the learner and will be formulated as "Program Goals" for the language arts program - a feat which Caswell (1966) contends is a difficult task but is one that is nonetheless always at the core of curriculum work. These goals undergird and promote consistency and coherence throughout the language arts curriculum framework and facilitate implementation by practitioners.

Language is a social behaviour. The child's first language was developed in the company of significant persons in his or her life. Language is cumulative and developmental. As the child grows, previous language experiences form the basis for expansion and deeper understanding by newer language experiences. This language arts framework is a guide for providing opportunities for children and students to experience language arts in an environment that promotes and develops functional, artistic and enjoyable language learning. The use of multiple goals is also new to the language arts syllabus in Barbados. Goals are a significant component of the proposed language arts framework and the aforementioned ideas are accompanied by an explanatory statement and are expressed as follows:

GOAL ONE

Students will demonstrate motivation to learn and use Standard English.

To realize their potential to learn and use Standard English, students must be highly motivated.

Therefore:

Barbadian elementary English language arts students will develop strong motivation by understanding and striving to attain high expectations of themselves through positive feelings of self-worth which contribute to responsible behaviour, personal and academic growth.

GOAL TWO

Students will demonstrate mastery of cumulative skills common to Standard English.

Proficiency in language arts skills are essential for acquiring knowledge and for success in life.

Therefore:

Barbadian elementary language arts students will, to their full potential, communicate effectively in speech, listening, writing, and reading with understanding, thus

developing knowledge of and ability in the language arts and decision-making.

GOAL THREE

Students will show respect for language variations.

A variety of styles or ways of speaking are observable in and among speakers. These differences are determined by regional and social influences.

Therefore:

Barbadian elementary English language arts teachers will recognize, appreciate and respect the language differences of their students. Students will be encouraged on entering school to think in their own dialect while gradually emphasizing quality and flexibility in the use of language, whether Bajan or Standard English.

GOAL FOUR

Students will acquire language in social situations.

Language is culturally transmitted and is created and maintained through social behaviour. It is a purposeful activity.

Therefore:

Barbadian elementary language arts students will be actively involved in authentic language situations. This will be effected through promoting an atmosphere of community, collaboration and risk-taking in the classroom.

GOAL FIVE

Students will engage in language as artistic expression.

Language is used to stir imagination, deepen understanding, arouse emotion and give pleasure through various forms of artistic expression.

Therefore:

Barbadian elementary English language arts students will have many opportunities to experience and respond to literature and other artistic media.

GOAL SIX

Students will use language to acquire information and knowledge.

Language is used to increase understanding of interests, phenomena, self and others. It is used for inquiry and for problem-solving.

Therefore:

> Barbadian elementary English language arts students will use language to gather, organize and present information in a comprehensive manner, on topics of interest to themselves.

The Major Objectives

Taba (1962) suggests that objectives should include information on some of the following:

- Concepts or ideas to be learned.
- Attitudes, sensitivities, and feelings to be developed.
- Ways of thinking to be reinforced, strengthened, or initiated.
- Habits and skills to be mastered.

However, because the proposed model of curriculum development requires cooperation with other stakeholders, formulating specific objectives will be postponed until the expertise of practitioners can be harnessed. Instead, major objectives were formulated. Bloom (1956, p. 36) explains that four questions need to be considered when creating objectives.

The first question: "How much knowledge is required for learning?" requires that a decision be made regarding details or generalizations. In this study, these options are not perceived as dichotomous, but rather as a continuum. There will be times in the curriculum where one kind of knowledge will be preferred over the other or degrees of each will be appropriate. For example, in describing a character in a story, details would be essential in creating the image of that character. On the other hand if the theme of some information is required then a generalization would be expected.

The second question: "How precisely need the student learn the required knowledge?" is related to the degree of precision of knowledge required. There will be times when accuracy will be crucial as in the reported description of an event, whereas at other times, a general understanding of the information at hand would override precision as in the retelling of a story.

The third question: "How is knowledge best organized for learning?" is related to the organization of learning, characteristic of constructivist learning theory. The teacher would

be expected to set up situations where the child is guided to make the conceptual relationships necessary for making sense of the information which confronts him or her within his or her zone of proximal development.

The fourth question is: "How meaningful need required knowledge-learning be to the student?" Knowledge learning needs to be realistic and must assist the child in making sense of the world. Knowledge must be transferable to other life situations. Again, the response to this question is not regarded as an immediate versus future need decision as Bloom indicates but rather an immediate need-future need decision.

In formulating the major objectives these criteria were used. The objectives identify a learning outcome, are consistent with curriculum aims, are precise, are feasible, are functional, are significant, and are appropriate (Pratt, 1980, 1994). Although the list of skills in the current language arts syllabus appear to be similar to the lists of objectives in the proposed language arts framework, they are different. The skills in the current document in Barbados are expected to be taught in sequence. The proposed major objectives are cumulatively listed with Objectives A to G for the 3 - 5 Age Group; Objectives A to K for the 6 - 8 Age Group and Objectives A to O for 9 - 11 Age Group, but are not in any particular sequence as any of these may be achieved in any lesson or set of lessons. The proposed major objectives are as follows:

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

A. Participate daily in print awareness processes.

B. Participate in representation processes (for example, dramatization).

C. Engage daily in concept building processes.

D. Participate daily in reading and writing processes.

E. Use language processes to build community.

F. Read, write, speak, and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences.

G. Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences.

H. Relate one literary work to another.

I. Use language processes to discover and explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.

J. Use language processes to comprehend and respond personally and critically to

literary and media texts.

K. Use language processes to manage ideas and information.

L. Use language processes to enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.

M. Use rubrics to evaluate language arts strategies and products for self-improvement.

N. Use language processes to choose and research a topic, both individually and as a team member.

O. Participate in test-taking procedures.

The Suggested Learning Experiences/Activities

Smith (1984) reminds us that every activity must have content. However, for the purpose of this study, there is no selected content in terms of what specific concepts should be developed. The "selected content" will be formulated in cooperation with practitioners in conjunction with the specific activities. This section answers Tyler's question, "What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?" "These purposes" refer to the educational purposes which were established in the "Program Goals."

Although curriculum planners know that teachers utilize and deliberately organize experiences in order to maximize learning, they must be aware that it is the teacher's ideology or philosophy which determines the nature of, and physical organization of, these learning experiences (Meighan, 1981), not the fact that they are stated in the curriculum. How the teacher translates or realizes the stated learning experiences (the idealized) is what matters most. It is the curriculum planner's task to assist the teacher in making explicit the intentions of the curriculum. By so doing, the probability of the teacher realizing the idealized experiences is increased. Since this new approach requires a shift in philosophical orientation from traditionally behaviouristic to constructivist, Table 1, p. 19, also provides a theoretical comparison which forms a rationale for understanding why particular experiences and content sources are being suggested in the language arts framework for teachers.

Priority will be given to learning experiences or activities that are directly related to the learner's experiences (Templeton, 1995), "interests, needs and capabilities" (Armstrong, 1989, p. 21). In a personal orientation to curriculum (Armstrong, 1989), content is directed towards the development of "thinking ability," "personal value" and the interactions of the

learners. These characteristics are in keeping with constructivist philosophy.

For the purpose of this study, any activity in which students engage which improves their physical, mental or cognitive state is considered an educational or learning experience. Learning experiences will be guided by five principles suggested by Tyler (1949). These are:

- the student must be given the opportunity to have experiences in order to be engaged in the kind of behaviour implied by the objective.
- the student must be encouraged to find satisfaction from engaging in the behaviour implied in the objective.
- the behaviours inherent in the objective are well within the capabilities of the child.
- there are a variety of experiences that can be used to attain the objective, and,
- a specific learning experience will result in several outcomes.

Determining learning activities is also influenced by the manner in which the curriculum defines language arts and how teachers perceive and enact that definition. The current language arts syllabus provides a list of skills. Teachers are required to incorporate these in activities in sequential order. Since the new approach to language arts is concerned with literacy and learner autonomy, it is imperative that teachers understand children's language and cognitive development. Children's literature, as discussed in detail in Chapter Two, plays a major role in facilitating language and cognitive development and is therefore foundational to the learning activities. Table 2, following, illustrates the suggested learning experiences and their related major objectives by age group as portrayed in the proposed language arts framework. The two are symbiotic.

Table 2

Suggested Learning Activities with Major Objectives

3 - 5 Years	
MAJOR OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ ACTIVITIES
A. Participate daily in print awareness processes.	- Book introductions (teacher initiated) - Dictated stories - Read alongs
B. Participate in representation processes.	- Dictated stories - Picture stories - Storytelling
C. Engage daily in concept building processes.	- Reciting rhymes/poems - Show and tell - Role playing/dramatizing - Informational reading
D. Participate daily in reading and writing processes.	- Informational writing - Informational reading - Read alongs
E. Use language processes to build community.	- Role playing/dramatizing
F. Read, write, speak, and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences.	- Following directions - Giving directions
G. Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences.	- Field trips - Open-ended discussions - Observations

6 - 8 Years	
MAJOR OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ ACTIVITIES
A. Participate daily in print awareness processes.	- Book introductions (teacher initiated) - Dictated stories - Read alongs
B. Participate in representation processes.	- Dictated stories - Picture stories - Storytelling
C. Engage daily in concept building processes.	- Reciting rhymes/poems - Show and tell - Role playing/dramatizing - Informational reading
D. Participate daily in reading and writing processes.	- Informational writing - Informational reading - Read alongs
E. Use language processes to build community.	- Role playing/dramatizing
F. Read, write, speak, and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences.	- Following directions - Giving directions
G. Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences.	- Field trips - Open-ended discussions - Observations
H. Relate one literary work to another.	- Patterned stories - Literature-based, in-depth discussions - Journal writing - Reading/writing workshops - Graphic representations - Book selection procedures

6 - 8 Years contd.	
MAJOR OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ ACTIVITIES
I. Use language processes to discover and explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.	- Field trips - Creating poems/stories - Informational reading - Journal writing - Teacher-pupil conferences
J. Use language processes to comprehend and respond personally and critically to literary and media texts.	- Storytelling - Literature-based, in-depth discussions - Author's circle
K. Use language processes to manage ideas and information.	- Graphic representations - Informational reading - Presentations - Self-evaluation procedures
9 - 11 Years	
A. Participate daily in print awareness processes.	- Book introductions (teacher initiated) - Dictated stories - Read alongs
B. Participate in representation processes.	- Dictated stories - Picture stories - Storytelling
C. Engage daily in concept building processes.	- Reciting rhymes/poems - Show and tell - Role playing/dramatizing - Informational reading

9 - 11 Years contd.	
MAJOR OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ ACTIVITIES
D. Participate daily in reading and writing processes.	- Informational writing - Informational reading - Read alongs
E. Use language processes to build community.	- Role playing/dramatizing
F. Read, write, speak, and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences.	- Following directions - Giving directions
G. Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences.	- Field trips - Open-ended discussions - Observations
H. Relate one literary work to another.	- Patterned stories - Literature-based, in-depth discussions - Journal writing - Reading/writing workshops - Graphic representations - Book selection procedures
I. Use language processes to discover and explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.	- Field trips - Creating poems/stories - Informational reading - Journal writing - Teacher-pupil conferences
J. Use language processes to comprehend and respond personally and critically to literary and media texts.	- Storytelling - Literature-based, in-depth discussions - Author's circle

9 - 11 Years contd.	
MAJOR OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ ACTIVITIES
K. Use language processes to manage ideas and information.	- Graphic representations - Informational reading - Informational writing - Presentations - Self-evaluation procedures
L. Use language processes to enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.	- Student publications - Peer conferences - Journal writing - Graphic representations
M. Use rubrics to evaluate language arts strategies and products for self-improvement.	- Student publications - Reading/writing workshops - Peer conferences - Self-evaluation procedures
N. Use language processes to choose and research a topic, both individually and as a team member.	- Projects - Novel studies - Presentations - Informational writing
O. Participate in test-taking procedures.	- Collaborative evaluations - Common entrance testing procedures

Assessment Opportunities

Kelly (1992) notes that assessment has been of growing concern in educational practice throughout the 1980s. Pollard (1997) attributes this interest to government concern in "measuring educational outputs" and growing interest by practitioners "who have increasingly come to realize the value of continuous assessment in informing the process of their teaching" (p. 276).

Assessment is one of those "subtle" and "complicated" terms used by varying persons (including decision-makers and practitioners) as if it were "straightforward and uncomplicated" (Kelly, 1992). Assessment is suggested as a term which "may bear many different meanings and nuances of meaning" (Kelly, 1992, p. 1) but one which is generally portrayed as having one common meaning by all who use it. It is therefore imperative that a definition be forthcoming.

Historically, assessment was perceived as measuring a student's cognitive or intellectual ability. This arose out of the view that there was a specific body of knowledge which each child was expected to learn. Assessment, then, involved a quantitative measure (Taba, 1949) of a student's attainment of knowledge with the purpose of classifying students according to their degree of achievement (Crebbin, 1993). Failures were attributed to deficiencies in the student rather than to faults in the system. Consequently, assessment was formal (norm-referenced or standardized) and summative (completed at the end of instruction).

In more recent times assessment is viewed from a different perspective. As used in this study the term 'assessment' is based on several key ideas:-

- that children understand the world by experiencing and actively reflecting upon knowledge related to it;
- that learning is a social activity related to concrete experiences through which meaning is constructed;
- that ability is multidimensional (Crebbin, 1993);
- that learning is a process, which by its nature is covert;
- that evidence of children's development is necessary for administrative and instructional purposes (Curtis, 1998; Edwards & Malicky, 1995).

Assessment, then, refers to on-going compilation and documentation of evidence of children's language and literacy development in a variety of contexts over a period of time (Burger, 1996, in Wishon et al., 1998; Farris, 1997; Goodman, 1991). Assessment, as depicted in this study, is perceived as primarily qualitative, informal and incorporating alternative forms of assessment (Goodman et al., 1989; Edwards & Malicky, 1996; Musthafa,

1996; Nutbrown, 1997; Robinson et al., 1996; Weaver & Henke, 1992), because assessment is designed to inform instruction and is appropriate for making inferences about learning as a developmental process (Wray & Medwell, 1991) rather than a substitute for standardized testing.

Informal assessment purposefully describes a particular student characteristic or set of characteristics (Gallagher, 1998; Nutbrown, 1994; Wishon et al., 1998) via the application of methods, strategies or tools as students engage in authentic tasks (Worthen et al., 1993 in Musthafa, 1996).

> Through their work with children teachers make judgements about what children know, their motivation, their abilities and their thinking. Such judgements are based upon what they see children do and hear children say and the work they produce (Nutbrown, 1994, p. 150).

Consequently, assessment must be planned and be on-going. It is dynamic and relates directly to instruction through instructional objectives and activities (Gallagher, 1998; Spillman, 1996; Taba, 1962; Tyler, 1949) and teachers' decisions, based on the interpretations they make about students' thinking and abilities. Evaluation results when interpretation, reflection and analysis of the "evidence" collected during assessment occur. It is the sense-making of assessment (Routman, 1991).

The methods of assessment or assessment opportunities, (as they are called in the language arts document, see Table 4, p. 64) are based on the definition of assessment given, and recognize that education, specifically language arts education, is a process which seeks to identify students' "schemas and nourish them with worthwhile curriculum content" (Nutbrown, 1994, p. 151) based on the objectives of the language arts curriculum. Learning involves the modification or alteration of schemas. By reason of its nature, the process of modifying schemas include content knowledge - knowing what has to be learned (the product), and strategic knowledge - knowing how to go about learning the content (the process). Creating experiences which engage students in acquiring content knowledge assists teachers in attaining specific objectives.

Assessment opportunities are the means by which evidence is collected on attainment of these objectives. They are process- and product-oriented and include records of various

sorts and observations of behaviour and of performance or "kid-watching" (Goodman, 1985). Refer to Table 3, p. 62, for descriptions of the forms of assessment suggested in the language arts framework and to Table 4, for the distribution of assessment opportunities across age groups. The current language arts syllabus in Barbados does not address assessment. However, assessment is currently achieved through teacher-made tests and standardized tests. For the proposed language arts framework, assessment is very significant. The framework establishes the interrelationship between objectives, activities and assessment. Like the learning activities, these are a sample of suggestions so that practitioners acquire a sense of the nature of assessment that maintains consistency with the philosophical principles undergirding the framework. This has serious implications for teacher education. The quality of interpretations, reflections and analyses are reflected in the quality of instructional decisions. The ability to make good evaluations and instructional decisions depend directly on the practitioner's philosophy and knowledge base (Wishon et al., 1998). By extension, practitioner knowledge also holds strong implications for the success or failure of the language arts curriculum as depicted in the proposed new approach. The success or failure of the proposed curriculum depends on effective teacher or practitioner evaluation and the degree of practitioner empowerment (Musthafa, 1996). The teacher has more flexibility and instructional freedom than previously. Along with this empowerment comes increased responsibility. The teacher must be knowledgeable not only in the related content suggested by the specific objective but the teacher must also know the appropriate assessment opportunity or opportunities to engage and for what purpose or purposes.

The Organization of the Language Arts Framework

The current elementary English language arts syllabus in Barbados is organized as English Language, Grammar, Composition, Comprehension, Handwriting, and Poetry. Concepts and language skills are arranged sequentially, in order of prerequisite skills and concepts to be taught by term and class (grade) level.

Table 5, p. 65, shows the structural organization and the relationship among components of the proposed language arts document. (The complete document can be found in Appendix B, p. 199.) Within each age group, program goals, major objectives, suggested

learning activities and assessment opportunities are matched with each other. With successive age groups, the components of each sub-section revisits those of the previous age group and builds upon them in a cumulative and expansive manner, reflecting the nature of language learning.

Table 3

Descriptions of Assessment Opportunities used in the Language Arts Framework

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES	
PROCESS - ORIENTED	PRODUCT - ORIENTED
Teacher Observations: Teachers look at students in different social settings and on different tasks with an aim to document the child's development and provide assistance where necessary. The same as kid-watching (Goodman, 1985).	**Portfolios**: Collections of student work samples over a period of time with the aim of talking to the student about how well the student has done and how the work could be done better (Farr & Tone, 1994, 1998; Paris & Ayres, 1994). **Writing Portfolios**: These could include plans, drafts and final products of student and teacher-selected writing that demonstrates the student's progress. **Literacy Folders**: A form of portfolio which evidences students' writing and reading samples. The term is used to reflect the fact that folders are used to store the students' work (Cooper, 1993). The literacy folder is not a random selection of information, rather a collection of work samples, records of independent reading and writing, self-assessments and formal tests (Cooper, 1993).

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES CONTD.	
PROCESS - ORIENTED	PRODUCT - ORIENTED
Conferencing: These are informal conversations between students and teachers to discuss concerns about instruction or work samples. The aim is to develop understanding of what has been accomplished so far and plan for further learning (Tompkins, 1997). **Teacher-pupil (student) conferences**: Conversations between teacher and student about a learning task or tasks. The teacher guides the session and may listen to the student's reading (Ediger, 1985b; Tompkins, 1998) or to discuss an aspect of the student's writing (Cooper, 1993; Graves, 1983). It is not used for evaluating students' work (Cooper, 1993). **Peer Conferences**: Conversations between persons of the same age groups about their work (Dahl, 1988). Peer conferences are usually conducted in preparation for a teacher-student conference (Cooper, 1993).	**Work Samples**: Examples of student work which can be compiled in folders or portfolios (Chan, 1989) over a period of time to capture the nature of the student's development. They include examples of activities, projects and events that occur as part of learning experiences (Tompkins & McGee, 1993).
Holistic Scoring with Rubrics: Rubrics are clear descriptions of student behaviours or performance expectations organized along a continuum of assessment guidelines (Wishon et al., 1998). Holistic scoring is the overall judgement achieved when raters review a writing sample (Cooper, 1977; Myers, 1980). Thus when these two techniques are combined the result is holistic scoring with rubrics instead of different raters.	**Anecdotal Records**: Factual narrative accounts written by the teacher to document an observation of student behaviour while the student is engaged in learning. They provide a general picture of student behaviour in a variety of learning and social settings (Ediger, 1985b; Rhodes & Nathenson-Mejia, 1992; Thorndike & Hagen, 1977).

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES CONTD.	
PROCESS - ORIENTED	PRODUCT - ORIENTED
	Sample Common Entrance Tests Procedures: These are opportunities for students to become familiar with the sequence of activities expected of them the day of the Common Entrance Examination, by completing past editions of the test.

Table 4

Assessment Opportunities Selected for the Language Arts Framework

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AGE GROUPS
• Teacher Observations **
• Writing Portfolios **
• Literacy Folders **
• Teacher-pupil Conferences **
• Work Samples **
• Anecdotal Records **
• Holistic Scoring of language products with rubrics
• Peer Conferences
• Sample Common Entrance Examinations
** indicates the 3 - 5 and 6 - 8 age groups only

Table 5

An Example of the Organization of the Language Arts Framework

PROGRAM GOALS	
(These are the same for all age groups) Students will: • demonstrate motivation to learn and use Standard English. • demonstrate mastery of cumulative skills common to Standard English. • show respect for language variations. • acquire language in social situations. • engage in language as artistic expression. • use language to acquire knowledge and information.	
Age Group	
MAJOR OBJECTIVES *(Arranged in cumulative order to reflect spiral curriculum)*	**SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ACTIVITIES** *(Complement the major objectives)*
A. Participate daily in print awareness processes. *(An example of how an objective matches an activity)*	- Read alongs - Reciting nursery rhymes *(Examples of activities that engage children in print awareness processes)*
ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES • Teacher Observations • Anecdotal Records	

Summary

This chapter culminates Phase I - the development and documentation of the language arts framework - and describes how curriculum theory and principles translate into a concrete and tangible blueprint document, an English language arts curriculum framework for the Barbadian context. It explains the physical layout of the document and provides a

systematic development of each structural component from philosophical statement to assessment opportunities. The physical layout of the framework emphasizes consistency and coherence within the document. The philosophical statement and forms of alternative (qualitative) assessment are highlighted and justified as features of the curriculum framework.

The major finding for this part of the study was that a proposed language arts framework designed for the Barbadian context and based on current research findings would likely consist of six characteristics new to a language arts curriculum document. These characteristics are:

1. A philosophical statement;
2. Multiple program goals;
3. Major objectives and Experience/activities deliberately arranged to allow for flexibility in planning and continuity of instruction;
4. Assessment opportunities directly related to instruction;
5. All of these arranged as a spiral curriculum; and
6. Organized into age clusters.

PHASE II

CHAPTER 4

EXPLORATORY FEEDBACK FROM STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Introduction

This chapter serves two purposes. It establishes a research design framework for the study and provides the rationale for using quantitative and qualitative elements for this section of the study. Quantitative feedback from various stakeholder groups (teachers, principals, lecturers, parents and business persons) was obtained through the use of questionnaires and a checklist. Qualitative elements of the data were provided through the use of open-ended questionnaire items which allowed participants to support their responses with comments, reasons and questions. The second purpose is that it also describes how the feasibility of cooperative curriculum development in the Barbadian context is explored. A description of the procedure is presented by elaborating on: (a) the instruments and data collection; (b); the selection of participants; and (c) the techniques of data analysis.

Research Design Framework

Charles (1998) defines descriptive research as research which:

> shows status by first describing and then to the extent possible, interpreting present and past situations, conditions, behaviors, interactions, events and trends. This information sometimes serves no end except to satisfy a desire to know, but not infrequently it provides a basis for decision-making (p. 242).

According to this definition, this study is descriptive as Phase I shows the status of the current language arts curriculum and curriculum development process in Barbados. It uses this "status" as a way of understanding and interpreting data from "past situations, conditions, behaviors, interactions, events and trends (via the Practitioner-oriented questionnaire) as a means for interpreting the present - the proposal of an English language arts framework - a basis for new decision making. It is a deliberate intention to "determine and report the way things are" (Gay, 1987, pp. 10-11).

In descriptive research and in this study the data sources are the participants or informants, the setting, documents and instruments (Charles, 1998). The instruments are particularly questionnaires, because of time or distance constraints, and were developed

because they answer questions that previously were not asked (Charles, 1998; Gay, 1987). Data consist primarily of descriptions and opinions but are numerically converted for interpretation and presented in tabular form so that the data are more clearly understood and can be directly compared (Charles, 1987).

Data Collection

This inquiry needed to access the opinions of participants about the curriculum framework. A method of data collection that was perceived as not prying into the private thoughts of participants was required because of the concerns of being identified once these thoughts had been documented. That this method inherently demands relatively little effort to complete, while at the same time was not restrictive in obtaining the desired information, was pertinent.

The Instruments

Although interviews allow the researcher "to pose questions and when necessary probe or otherwise follow up to obtain clearer responses in greater depth" (Charles, 1995, p. 106), interviews were not possible in this study because of time constraints (Charles, 1995; Hopkins, 1980). In addition, most Barbadians have a general aversion to being tape-recorded. Questionnaires were therefore selected for use in this inquiry.

Questionnaires are a popular method for gathering information but the method was not chosen without serious consideration. Generally, in Barbados, questionnaires are not treated with the seriousness with which they are intended by researchers. Many teachers see them as added paper-work and do not feel any responsibility for their return. In some instances questionnaires have been filled with meaningless words just to have them completed. Given these reasons and the potential problems associated with the use of questionnaires, I consciously designed the questionnaires to take on the characteristics of interviews as much as was possible. Open-ended questions were employed to "permit the responding person to create an answer" (Hopkins, 1980, p. 296) as with an interview. Structured items were also included where the response was to be limited to a particular choice. Ample space was provided and respondents were encouraged to use the backs of pages if the space proved to be insufficient. Time was planned to permit follow-up interaction as needed. An initial

meeting was set up to establish trust, confidence and commitment to the research project. Initial face-to-face contact at the introductory meeting was believed likely to enhance these qualities.

After much deliberation, one main instrument and two supporting instruments were selected and used for gathering data in this phase of the study - two questionnaires and a modified checklist. The main instrument was the Language Arts Questionnaire. The Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire and the Employability Skills Profile were used as two supporting instruments. Field notes and incidental conversations were also used for collecting data.

The Language Arts Framework Questionnaire.

This questionnaire (refer to Appendix C, p. 218) was developed to complement the language arts framework document (Appendix B, p. 199). This document was described in detail in Chapter 3. The Language Arts Framework Questionnaire is structured in a similar manner to the language arts framework. The questionnaire was used to cue teachers, principals, lecturers and parents to specific aspects of the curriculum framework such as the Philosophy, Objectives, Suggested Learning Experiences, and Assessment before they were required to complete a matching section on the questionnaire by way of responding to a mixture of open-ended and structured items. For example, before responding to "What do you perceive as the potential value of this philosophy?" respondents had to study the "Comprehensive Philosophy For Language Arts" before writing their comment. The structured items requested that a reason be given to support a choice of option. This approach was employed because it required conscious and deliberate thought and reflection regarding specific aspects of the curriculum on the part of the participant. It was believed that it also promoted professional and reliable feedback on the document. It also facilitated management of the data produced (Quantz, 1992).

The Practitioner-Oriented Questionnaire.

This open-ended questionnaire was designed for distribution only to teachers and principals because it specifically required instruction-based information (refer to Appendix D, p. 231). The questionnaire elicited information about two specified areas - language arts

instruction and teacher professional development. Since I had been away from teaching for more than two years, and especially because I did not have any elementary teaching experience in Barbados, it was a way of providing a more current perspective on the practitioner context. For the latter reasons, it was considered a necessary component to the research. The items of the questionnaire were constructed according to the criteria suggested by Charles (1995), Gay (1996) and Hopkins (1980) where particular attention was given to:

(a) checking the content validity to ensure that the items were indeed measuring what they were intending to measure,

(b) making sure the items were comprehensible, and

(c) adding any items they thought would assist in obtaining relevant information.

The questionnaire was piloted among three graduate students as part of an assignment in a course on qualitative research at the University of Alberta. The participants were close in characteristics to those described in this study, that is, they were English language arts teachers (one elementary and two teacher educators) with West Indian backgrounds. They were asked to follow the criteria as suggested in the previous paragraph. This piloting exercise ensured content validity and reliability (Gay, 1996; Hittleman & Simon, 1997) of the instrument and, consequently, of the data generated.

The Checklist

The "Employability Skills Profile: Critical Skills Required of the Barbadian Workforce" checklist (refer to Appendix E, p. 235) was modeled after the "Employability Skills Profile: The Critical Skills Required of the Canadian Workforce," (The National Business and Education Centre, 1997). The language was altered to make it suitable for the Barbadian context. This checklist was presented to business persons only. The checklist was a way of eliciting responses of business persons to the language arts framework in an indirect manner. All of the language and social skills that are mentioned in the Employability Skills Profile were embedded in the language arts document as activities or strategies.

English Language Arts Syllabus

This document served as a way of checking the content validity of responses to the Practitioner-oriented questionnaire. In addition, it was used as a design referent for attaining a more user-friendly language arts framework.

Field notes

Field notes are "the written accounts of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 107). Field notes were preferred to tape recordings because tapes only capture sounds. Tape recordings exclude the visual, the impressions and remarks made before and after the event (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Condensed field notes (Spradley, 1980) were used for the first and second meetings and with the few conversations that were directly connected to the study.

Immediately after each meeting, I typed out on the computer (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) a description of the participants, their activities and the ambiance of the setting to create what Spradley (1980) calls "concrete facts." During one conversation I was able to make notes and after two telephone conversations I was able to capture salient points in my notes. The aim was to re-create each event. It was necessary for my notes to be detailed, extensive and as accurate as possible. Field notes were also helpful in documenting the resolution of the methodological problems that I faced.

Incidental Conversations

It was anticipated that it might be possible and certainly more comfortable for participants and myself to engage in informal conversations as a rich source of data. However, this was not possible, which was unfortunate as conversation is Barbadians' most natural mode of sharing, given that Barbados is a traditionally oral society. Due to mandated in-services that took place during the investigation, it was not possible to have these kinds of conversations with the participants.

Tape-recording conversations was not selected for a variety of reasons including the unwillingness of participants to be taped as well as the unreliability of the equipment and power supply.

Participant Selection

It was intended that at least 27 participants would be involved in this study. They were to be chosen from among personnel from the various stakeholder groups as outlined in the proposed curriculum development model in Chapter 2. These participants were chosen particularly because each group has a stake (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), a share or interest (Guba & Lincoln, 1988) in the education of the nation's children and a right to comment on and have input into the curriculum program offered in the nation's schools (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). They were also included because of their characteristic ways of thinking and behaving - their 'culture' (Gay, 1996), their ways of experiencing their realities (Guba, 1981), their ways of constructing meaning of curriculum development and language arts instruction. These characteristics directly contribute to my research interests, whether persons are curriculum designers, lecturers, business persons or concerned parents. The stakeholders selected for this exploration therefore included teachers, principals, lecturers, curriculum developers as ministry officials, parents and business persons.

The value of the inclusion of educators and ministry officials in a study which focuses on curriculum development is obvious, but the value of including parents and business persons may not be so obvious to persons outside the North American context. Therefore some explanation is appropriate.

Persons from the business sector were included as a means of indirectly monitoring the consistency of the framework in preparing students for life through employment. Based on personal experience regarding responses from the business sector, as a group, I have observed that their main concern is not with the curriculum per se, but its product, that is, whether or not the curriculum adequately prepares students for the world of work from their perspective as employers. By including "work skills" in the language arts framework and having business persons respond to those skills in a manner familiar to them, it was hoped that their responses would allow inferences to be made regarding the skills included in the language arts framework.

Parents were included for their response to the program in order to gain insight into a parental perspective of a potential change in the language arts curriculum. The current

trend in the research literature indicates a growing interest by parents to be involved in their children's learning (Epstein, 1984,1986, 1995; Epstein et al., 1997). To date there are no known data in the Barbadian context that depicts a parental viewpoint on this matter.

Students were deliberately omitted from the groups of stakeholders for two reasons: it required both time and expertise to construct items that would be comprehensible to elementary school-aged children while simultaneously eliciting responses that would be useful to the study. Table 6, following, shows the distribution of stakeholders that were intended for the study (possible) and those who participated (actual). Given that Barbados has a small population, some groups are small in number because few people are employed in those positions. For example, there is only one Education Officer for Language Arts and there are only two lecturers responsible for Language Arts at the tertiary level.

Table 6

Summary of Participants Involved in the Study

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	NUMBER OF PERSONS	
	Actual	Possible
Teachers	8	11
Principals	9	11
Lecturers	2	2
Parents	4	5
Education Officer	0	1
Business Persons	8	8
TOTAL	31	38

Sampling Procedures

At the university, teachers' college and ministry levels cluster sampling (Hittleman & Simon, 1997) was employed. According to Hittleman and Simon (1997) cluster sampling occurs "when intact groups are selected" (p. 140).

At the elementary school level, purposive sampling (Merriam, 1988) or purposeful sampling (Patton, 1980, 1990) was employed, resulting in one school from each parish or

political boundary (11 schools) and their corresponding pairs (a principal and a teacher) being selected. The rationale undergirding this type of sampling procedure is based on the assumption that "one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most" (Merriam, 1988, p. 49) but without the burden of having to generalize to other cases in the population (Patton, 1980). This requires that a set of criteria be established; hence another term associated with this type of sampling - criterion-based sampling (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Merriam, 1988) where a sample is matched against those criteria. Establishing criteria requires that the researcher must "know certain information about variations among cases" (Patton, 1980, p. 100). The criteria for schools included in the study were that they be representative of the variety of schools in Barbados.

Being native to the island, as researcher and educator, I possessed the knowledge that schools built with World Bank Funds were not representative of schools on the island. These newly-built schools have enclosed classrooms only. Choosing one school from each parish that had both open-hall (un-enclosed) and enclosed or semi-enclosed classrooms increased the chances of a variety of school types being accessed. Therefore the schools in the study are representative of the types of elementary schools across the island.

The total sample in this study thus comprised 1 person each from two tertiary educational institutions, 17 out of a possible 23 persons from the Ministry of Education including the elementary school principals, and teachers of children in the 3 - 11 age group, 8 persons from the business sector and 4 out of a possible 5 parents. A total of 31 persons were involved in the research exploration.

In qualitative research, because it occurs in the natural setting, the researcher is not in control of the variables and cannot manipulate them. There were several changes in the natural setting of which I was unaware when the logistics of the study were worked out. Consequently, I was faced with making alternative choices in terms of participant selection. These will be described as the procedures themselves are described.

Triangulation

Allowing the various stakeholder groups to participate in the study promotes triangulation of data as a means of adding "scope and breadth" to the study (Creswell, 1994) from different sources. Triangulation is the use of multiple sources of data or multiple methods (Merriam, 1988) "to confirm the emerging findings" in achieving "holistic understanding" of the set of circumstances, to construct "plausible explanations about the phenomena being studied" according to Merriam (1988, p. 169). In this study, triangulation of data is effected in the manner depicted in Figure 3.

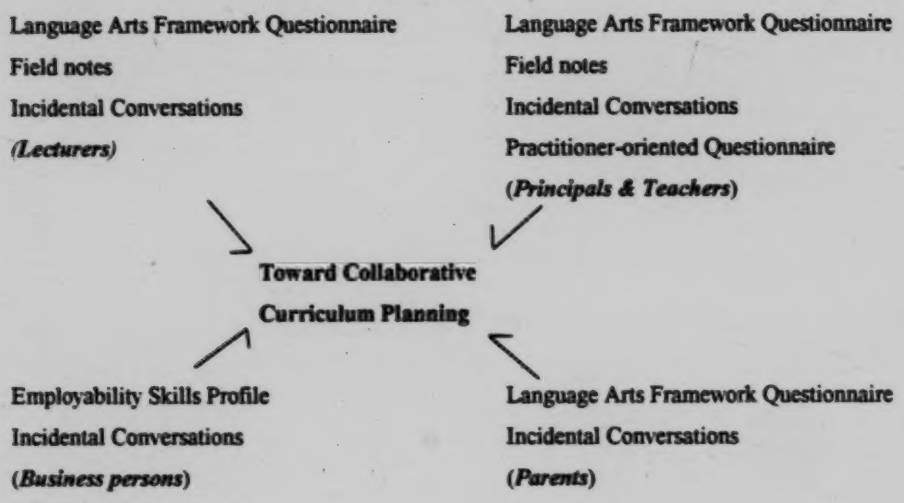

Figure 3. Illustration of Triangulation for the Study. The figure shows the distribution of instruments among stakeholder groups and demonstrates how each group manifests as a source of data.

Research Procedures

I was on the island from the beginning of December, 1997 to the middle of January, 1998, making the prerequisite arrangements for carrying out the study. Letters requesting permission to conduct the study were sent to the Ministry of Education, the Teachers' College and the Barbados Manufacturers Association (BMA). I began tracking down the

President of the National Council of Parent-Teachers' Association (NCPTA). I was granted permission by the university lecturer by telephone. Since it was approaching Christmas holidays, I had expected to receive responses in early January. However, permission was promptly granted by the Ministry and the Teachers' College. Both letters of response provided names of contact persons from the respective institution.

The actual data collection occurred from mid January to the end of March. The allotted time initially set (mid January to the end of February) was thought to be adequate for the consideration of issues raised in the questionnaire, composition of the responses (Hopkins, 1980; Hittleman, 1997) and the prompt return of responses. It was also thought to afford me ample time to seek clarification of responses, if the need had arisen, while I was still on the island. Once I returned to Canada, contacting these participants would prove futile.

I allowed two weeks for participants to establish their routines after the Christmas break, before making direct contact with them. Hence, the mid January start of data collection.

Ministry Official

When I first contacted the Education officer at the Ministry of Education, the officer was off the island and due to return within two weeks. No other officer could be of assistance because there is only one education officer for primary language arts. By the end of January, the education officer had returned to the island and offered assistance in making arrangements for meetings with participants at the Ministry of Education. However, the officer was unable to participate in the research project. Therefore, there is no Ministry of Education representative in the study.

I requested the services of a recently-retired education officer at the recommendation of a former supervisor from my master's studies. This retiree was very accommodating in assisting me in identifying schools that were representative of the schools for each parish and so the 11 schools were selected. Each school consisted of a pair of participants (1 principal and 1 teacher). The project was by now running three weeks behind the scheduled time.

Teachers and Principals

Once the schools were selected, letters of introduction were mailed. Two days later, I telephoned each principal to ascertain that they had indeed received their letters and that they had more than five working days to make necessary arrangements for attending the introductory meeting.

Three meetings were set up with participants at the Ministry of Education in the city, in the Audio-visual Aids Conference room because it was easily accessible for all concerned. Participants were travelling from all eleven parishes across the island. The room was arranged so that we could sit as a group facing each other in an air-conditioned, well-lit atmosphere. The meetings were booked for the Monday of the second and the third weeks in February and the first week in March.

Only 7 out of a possible 22 people attended the introductory meeting. On the morning of that meeting I received telephone calls from two principals informing me of a ministry-organized in-service that would keep them away from my meeting. Participants who did attend were thanked for attending the meeting, an overview of the study was presented, the Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire and consent forms were distributed and the nature of further participation was explained. Delivering the questionnaire by hand at the meeting ensured that they were received and assisted the participants in establishing a sense of commitment (Hopkins, 1980). It was also likely to increase the rate of return (Charles, 1995; Gay, 1996). The date and time of the second meeting was announced and the meeting ended with much discussion about the many changes that were occurring on different levels in the educational system.

The day following the introductory meeting, I telephoned the six absentee schools. I wanted to find out whether their absence was an indication that they did not want to participate. They did want to participate and none of them opted out of the study. I made arrangements to have their questionnaires delivered. They were also informed that at the second meeting scheduled for the week following, their questionnaires and consent forms would be collected and the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire would be distributed. They were also reminded that they could contact me at the telephone number on the

questionnaire if they were experiencing any difficulty with any of the items.

There were many educational changes occurring at the time of data collection. The second meeting fell victim to a two-day teacher appraisal seminar. Three of the 11 schools were represented by the four people who attended. The Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire was collected and the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire was distributed. Again there was much discussion afterwards about the magnitude of the educational changes and some of the issues brought up in the Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire. Some of these issues included dialect as the first language of many Barbadian students, Standard English as the language of instruction, the "perceived disempowerment" of the principal and frustrations with inadequate funding, to mention a few . One pair of teachers experienced transportation problems and arrived at the conference room after I had returned home. They telephoned me and were instructed to leave their Practitioner-oriented Questionnaires with the receptionist. I updated them with the key points of the meeting and arranged to have their Language Arts Framework Questionnaires delivered to them.

As on the previous occasion, I telephoned the eight schools that did not have a representative in attendance at the second meeting. I made arrangements to collect the completed Practitioner-oriented Questionnaires, distribute the Language Arts Framework Questionnaires and to give the date and time of the final meeting. This time, some of the principals conversed with me. They raised concerns about the number of changes that were occurring in the system and how these changes were requiring them to be away from the schools too often. At this point in the data collection, two schools still had not completed the Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire. The principals assured me they would try to have them completed within the week. Delivering the Language Arts Framework Questionnaires to some schools afforded me an opportunity to experience firsthand, the challenging circumstances under which some participants work and the distance they would have to travel to attend my meetings. I was amazed to observe how teachers were able to teach and get children to pay attention while another class was only a few feet away on each side of the room. Some of the buildings were also old enough to qualify as National Trust buildings for historic preservation. The lighting in some of the schools seemed to be inadequate.

I had to cancel the third and final meeting. By the time all of the schools received the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire they would not have had enough time to complete them properly before the final meeting. This meant that I had to telephone to make inquiries as to when the participants expected they would be finished, so that I could arrange to have the questionnaires collected. There were a few participants who fell ill and could not complete their questionnaires in the time allotted.

At this stage of the data collection, with only a few weeks before I was due to leave the island, one school opted out. None of the questionnaires were completed. I frantically searched for a replacement because it became obvious that two other schools were also likely not to be ready with the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire. I was still hoping that they would have completed the first questionnaire (the Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire), since that required less effort. With the study nearing its end, I thought I had a reasonable chance of replacing one school. Replacing three schools was thought to be a near-impossible task. Once again, my former supervisor in Barbados made a suggestion that worked out perfectly. In order to give participants more time to complete their questionnaires, I had to re-book my flight. Instead of returning to Edmonton by mid March I returned the first week in April.

In the final week of March, incidentally, the same week as my return to Canada, most of the schools had not returned the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire and three were still outstanding with the Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire. When I visited 1 of the 2 schools that had not returned any of the questionnaires, the principal admitted that none of the questionnaires had been read. I was informed that they would be completed over the Easter holidays and given to my husband who would send them to me. The principal of the other school said that the questionnaires were too much work and that it would not be possible to have them completed in time for me to travel with them. With the end of term fast approaching, I did not expect either of these two schools to have completed their instruments. Therefore 9 of 11 original schools participated in the research.

The morning of the day of departure for Edmonton, I was still collecting data. This placed me in an unfortunate situation. I was not able to peruse the data to ensure that all

respondents had completed their questionnaires properly, nor was I able to follow through on comments that appeared to be ambiguous or vague. I was not able to find out why individuals gave no written response to some items. These issues would influence the analysis of the data.

Lecturers

I had no difficulty contacting the lecturers. One lecturer suggested that I forward the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire as soon as possible so that it could be responded to properly. By the end of the third week in January, this lecturer had received the questionnaire, the language arts framework and a consent form. After three weeks the questionnaire had not been returned. I was contacted by this lecturer who re-assured me that the completed questionnaire would be returned but more time was needed. I eventually received the completed questionnaire and consent form by fax, two weeks after my return to Edmonton.

The other lecturer received similar instruments the final week in January and returned the completed instrument the third week in February. We met at the institution and went through the questionnaire responses. This lecturer found it convenient to read through the document, indicate an option, and type out the comments in essay format. For some items comments were already written in. I was then able to type out the comments for the appropriate age groups where they were missing from the questionnaire.

The Parents

I experienced great difficulty locating the NCPTA president. By the third week of February, I was still unable to locate the president of the NCPTA. Eventually, I discovered that the previous president had resigned and no one could give me the name of the newly-elected president. As my deadline was fast approaching, I finally decided that it would be beneficial to approach parents known to me, who would likely respond honestly to the questionnaire, rather than not have any parents represented in the research study. I informed my thesis supervisor of my decision by email. Five parents were contacted and given the Language Arts Questionnaire to be returned within three weeks. I thought I would be able to meet my original departure date.

I did not anticipate that collecting data from the parents would also prove to be challenging. One parent decided to keep the instrument because it was interesting, but could not find the time to complete it. Only one parent met the deadline for return. I had to telephone the others to remind them that I was running out of time and I managed to have the fourth questionnaire collected the day before I departed for Edmonton.

Business Persons

Three weeks had passed since I had sent the letter of introduction to the president of the BMA. I still had not been informed of the BMA's decision. I telephoned the president and was told that the letter had in fact been received and had been passed on to another executive member, who was to deal with the matter. I made contact and was able to clarify what was an apparent misinterpretation of the procedure described in the letter. My contact requested that I fax the checklist to the office where it would be disseminated to the other seven executive members. I complied the next day.

The first week in March, I telephoned the office only to be told that four checklists were returned. At the end of the week the number of returned checklists remained the same. By this time I had conceded that I would have to change the date of my departure. As a result, I was calling the office initially once every three days, then once every two days before I decided to collect the completed checklists and seek an alternative source. I decided to randomly select businesses from the telephone directory to make up the four persons who had not responded. I called and asked to speak with the human resources manager, explained the situation and the first four volunteers interested in assisting me became the new participants in the study. I received all the checklists with enough time to check them and realize that two were problematic. I was able to have them both redone correctly. Again, I was afforded the opportunity to converse with participants and gained information that was beneficial in understanding the perceptions of two participants.

I therefore obtained 17 out of 22 completed copies of the Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire (8 from 11 teachers and 9 from 11 principals); 20 out of 29 completed copies of the Language Arts Questionnaire (2, from the 2 lecturers; 4, from the 5 parents; 8 from 11 principals and 6 from 11 teachers); and 8 out of 8 Checklists from business persons.

Data Analysis

A content analysis (Anderson, 1997; Osgood, 1959; Weber, 1985) was carried out on the comments of each questionnaire and field notes of conversations. Content analysis is "a research methodology that utilizes a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text" (Weber, 1985, p. 9). According to Osgood (1959) and Weber (1985) content analysis allows for valid inferences to be made from the content of a communicated message or "text." These inferences can be about the "the sender(s) of the message, the message itself, or the audience of the message" (Weber, 1985, p. 9). For the purpose of this study, inferences are limited to the messages and the senders of the message.

The data were read and reread several times to identify recurring ideas, themes, categories, (Wiersma, 1995) patterns and regularities (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After categories were labelled for the inferences made, another graduate student was asked to read the data independently and to suggest categories. Although the terminology varied between us in sections, the gist of the meaning of the labels remained similar to the labels I had created. A reflective journal was kept as a means of documenting my thought processes, events and impromptu decision making. I have reported the results in such a way that the reader can follow the manner in which I make connections and identify the themes that have emerged from the data. These emerging themes (Cresswell, 1994; Tesch, 1995) or conceptual categories (Merriam, 1988) were utilized to construct simple contingency tables to display the themes by numerical description. These categories form the basis of illustrating, supporting or challenging theoretical assumptions held prior to the data-gathering phase of the research (Merriam, 1988).

Given the fact that the research literature focuses on program development (Ediger, 1985a & 1991; Erickson, 1995; Taba, 1962; Tchudi, 1991; Tyler, 1949) and does not match the Barbadian context directly, the literature forms the referent for the process of data analysis and interpretation. As well, the literature addresses program design to the extent that it accounts for the presence of these phenomena. Where phenomena arose which could not be accounted for by existing theory, I have suggested alternative explanations.

In the case of the checklist, the responses were assigned the corresponding themes from the original skills profile and then compared with the learning objectives of the language arts framework.

Field notes were analyzed for recurrent themes and patterns in order to make interpretations, gain insights from the data and formulate new questions (Spradley, 1980). In addition, themes were identified from the literature and their relationship to the data noted. Analysis also focused on identifying themes or items that hold implications for on-going teacher professional development intended for complementing the language arts instructional program.

Trustworthiness/Dependability

The questionnaire items were previewed by colleagues and persons experienced in the area to check for consistency, comprehensibility and inclusiveness of each item (Hopkins, 1980). In addition, the cover letter for each questionnaire requested each respondent to be as intellectually and professionally honest as possible. This point was reiterated at the introductory meeting and the debriefing telephone calls.

Ethical Considerations

This research was governed by the ethical conditions outlined by the University of Alberta which guarantee safety and anonymity to participants. The research had little potential for creating any kind of harm or any negative effects to its participants. It was anticipated that no serious ethical questions would be raised by the inquiry.

However, to ensure confidentiality and anonymity to participants no names were used. Instead, participants were referred to by their group name such as teachers, principals, lecturers, parents and business persons.

A copy of the completed study will be available to the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, the teachers' college and the university library where the participants and others will have access to the results.

At each phase of the research process, my dissertation committee was kept informed via my supervisor, initially by email from Barbados, and on my return to Canada.

Summary

This chapter described Phase II of the study. A quantitative-qualitative approach was rationalized as the appropriate orientation for this study. Purposive sampling was described as a suitable means for obtaining in-depth data from participants and because of the small numbers of group members occurring in the population. The instruments used in the study were described and identified as questionnaires, field notes and a checklist. Seventeen copies of the Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire, 20 copies of the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire, and eight Employability Skills Profiles were completed and returned. The data collection and the inductive analysis processes were described. Ethical considerations inherent in the study were presented along with the trustworthiness of the study.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study consists of two phases - the development and documentation of an elementary English language arts curriculum framework designed for the Barbadian context, and the collection of feedback from stakeholder groups to the proposed language arts curriculum framework. In this chapter, the two phases of the study are brought together through the analysis and interpretation of the feedback from the various stakeholder groups. The findings that have emerged through the analysis of the data are primarily from the main instrument - the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire, with supporting data from the Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire and the Employability Skills Profile. The findings are presented in relation to the second research question which guided the research exploration. This question is:-

- What is the nature of stakeholder response to a proposed language arts curriculum framework?

Stakeholder Response

Responses were analyzed and interpreted from two perspectives:

1) responses of groups in relation to a model of curriculum development proposed for the Barbadian context that would include stakeholder participation; and

2) responses of stakeholder groups to the specific components of the language arts framework.

Responses of Stakeholder Groups to Involvement in Curriculum Development

The stakeholder groups were teachers, principals, lecturers, parents and business persons. Accessing these stakeholder groups for the research study was challenging. In spite of the difficulty experienced in accessing stakeholder groups, there were very positive signs of interest by all of the stakeholder groups in participating in the study and, by extension, curriculum development. Members of all the stakeholder groups exhibited commitment to the project by completing and returning their respective instruments. The proposed model of curriculum development holds implications for large-scale involvement by stakeholder

groups in curriculum development. This finding shows that a model of curriculum development for Barbados, that includes stakeholder groups, possesses great potential as a model fit for language arts curriculum development.

Groups displayed varying degrees of response. This response ranged from eagerness to participate and to return instruments promptly through to scant disregard for completing instruments and tardiness in returning completed instruments. The nature of these responses may in part be a limitation of using a questionnaire.

Principals displayed a range of responses to the instruments. One principal indicated in an informal conversation "these questionnaires are a lot of work! They come at a bad time too, with all these changes and meetings. You don't know from day to day when or if you'll be here [at the school] or not. These things [the questionnaires] will take up a lot o' time."

Another saw it as an opportunity to engage her staff in professional development. She said, "I've met with my staff and we've had some interesting discussions on some of the ideas that were presented in the language arts framework."

Some teachers seemed to be influenced by their principals. Such teachers did not have access to their questionnaires without the principal. When the principal was not on the school premises, the questionnaires were locked in the office. This behaviour contributed to the tardiness of questionnaire return since principals were required to be at in-services frequently. Some teachers were able to return their questionnaires before their principal. In two cases teachers did not attempt their questionnaires. This varied behaviour on the part of principals has strong implications for freedom of response by teachers and needs to be addressed for future explorations.

While lecturers were busy, they indicated an obvious commitment to completing and returning their questionnaires, even though I received one long after my return to Canada.

Parents, like principals, shared a variety of responses. Two of the five parents returned their questionnaires promptly. One did not return her questionnaire and two others returned theirs close to my departure. One parent, who did not have post-secondary education, expressed difficulty with the format of the questionnaire. This parent suggested that the concept density of the philosophical statement was too high and interferred with

comprehension. The other parents seemed not to experience any difficulty with that section of the document but each of them had attained post-secondary education. If this document is to be presented to parents of all levels of education, these levels will have to be accommodated by altering the format and/or the language of the document.

Regarding group response to the opportunity to participate in curriculum development, teachers and principals were in a better position to express their opinions. They were explicitly asked, in the Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire (their first questionnaire) to respond to the issue of mandated programs. Practitioners generally expressed a dislike of mandated programs for reasons which could be categorized as related to the child, teacher, curriculum and program evaluation. Table 7 shows these reasons more clearly.

Table 7

Practitioner Concerns about Mandated Language Arts Programs

CATEGORY OF CONCERN	REASON
Child Related	The syllabus tends to cater mainly to the brighter children and not the slower or exceptional ones. ... language study to be more investigative on the part of pupils. My main concern would be whether slow-learners should be able to master the same number of behaviours as the average and high-flyer student and in the same time. ... some aspects beyond pupils' abilities in the primary school.
Teacher Related	Teachers consciously or unconsciously try to teach the syllabus as set out and some of their ideas gained through the years of experience are not utilized. Teachers should support students in an "authoritative and imaginative"manner. Personnel who are teaching pupils should have some input. Should have an input else you do not develop ownership of the program.

CATEGORY OF CONCERN	REASON
Curriculum Related	The syllabus is too expansive to be covered in one school year. Too compact... The problem is that some areas are set out in such a way that teachers are not always sure of what is intended or how far to go. The programme should help language study to be more investigative on the part of pupils with authoritative and imaginative support from teachers. In my opinion it is not the ideal programme... principals and teachers should have input in the formulation of the syllabus. If it is developed by a cross-section of teachers from the primary school it should be reasonable.
Program Evaluation	There should also be continuous assessment after implementation.

These views indicate that practitioners are already favourable to a cooperative approach to curriculum development and are aware of the benefits of such an approach.

In addition, they have demonstrated a willingness to participate in curriculum development based on the comments below:

Teachers: Being familiar with the students' background I will be better able to design programs which are applicable to their needs - socially, culturally, etc.

With my classroom experience and professional training I believe I could work with other professionals in designing a programme which focuses on literacy development.

This [engaging in curriculum development] would be a means of trying to breakdown outdated habits of teaching.

Principals: Programme must match and reflect learning strategies of learners especially those with special needs.

I am interested in any opportunity which would provide learning and sharing ideas or knowledge that can upgrade the education offered to children in a rapidly developing world.

I believe I can make a valuable contribution.

I would be willing to assist in designing a new programme. As practicing educators, coming into contact with students, we are familiar with concepts which give most trouble.

I'll be willing to add new ideas to which I've been exposed.

These practitioners are willing to make a valuable and professional contribution to a crucial subject area for reasons that are consistent with those stated in the comprehensive philosophical statement in the language arts framework.

The Language Arts Framework

The findings for each component of the language arts framework are presented in the same sequence in which they occur in the language arts document. For economy of space, summary tables are presented together for each section, and where appropriate, for each age group. The stakeholders who generated these findings were teachers, principals, lecturers and parents. Where more than half the number of members of a group retained an item, that item was considered retained by a majority. Since there were only two (2) lecturers, where there is a difference in opinion between them, that item will be considered undecided. The same conditions apply where only 2 of the 4 parents responded, as for the 3 - 5 and 6 - 8 age groups.

The Philosophical Statement

For this component, participants were required to respond to this question: "What do you perceive as the potential value of this philosophy?" and to make comments for suggesting improvements to the philosophical statement. Recall that the inclusion of a philosophical statement is a new feature of the language arts curriculum and responses to it suggest that it is considered a significant addition by the participants.

Perceived Potential Value of the Philosophical Statement.

Content analysis revealed commonalities across groups in terms of three general themes that emerged from the data. These are:

(1) acknowledgment that the proposed framework is child-centred;

(2) anticipation of improvement in language learning/teaching; and

(3) anticipation of an improved learning environment.

However, there were differences among groups in the manner in which these themes were expressed. In the sample responses below, the perceived value of the "Comprehensive Philosophy for Language Arts" is expressed as 'child-centredness:'

Parents (n = 2): To facilitate children becoming thinkers.
... emphasizes incorporation of students' interests.

Principals (n = 8): This philosophy seems to have scope for children to become competent, confident, readers, writers and thinkers.

It is child-centred.

Teachers (n = 6): The potential value of this philosophy is the total development of the child. From this philosophy, I can see the kind of pupil who is moulded to take up their role in society and the world of work. It also looks into the development of independent thinkers and creative pupils who would continue on throughout life and even pass on previous knowledge to others.

The philosophy leads to producing a child who becomes a lifelong thinker and learner, sees language as a natural, active, social and flexible process, becomes an effective contributing member of society

Lecturers (n = 2): It emphasizes a child-centred approach.

Although each of these groups focused on the child, there were clear differences in the manner in which children were perceived as thinkers among parents, principals and teachers. Teachers were the only group that projected children's thinking outside the school and into the world of work.

Lecturers did not elaborate on the child-centred orientation.

Similarly, differences were revealed among the stakeholder groups on the factor of "learning environment."

Parents: Should lead to a more comfortable environment in which children freely participate and express themselves.

Teachers: This philosophy focuses on all areas that would impact on the child as a successful language learner...the school environment - rich in literature...

Principals: Curriculum programme planning and learning activities will be geared towards combining children's natural instincts, gifts, interests, prior knowledge and experiences with a rich learning environment to motivate children to learn and develop language.

It suggests that children be exposed to a secure environment in which the reading, writing, speaking, listening and thinking should not be treated as separate entities but rather as being synergistic.

Lecturers: (Did not respond directly to the learning environment.)

These comments supported the theme of "language learning/teaching process."

Parents: To awaken not only children but teachers to the importance of language learning.

Learning process is driven by the student and emphasizes incorporation of students' interest.

Principals: The philosophy has shown the importance of integrating children's experiences in the teaching/learning process.

It addresses the issues involved in a collaborative approach to learning...

Language arts must no longer be viewed as a number of subjects taught separately and focus on what teachers do, but an integrated set of communication skills which form an integral part of every aspect of children's lives...

Teachers: Enabling students to be actively involved in their learning.

Lecturers: If adopted, language learning and teaching (note the order) will be more pupil-centred. Communicative competence rather than knowledge about language should result.

That each group focused on different aspects of the same factor supports the view that each stakeholder group has a unique contribution to make to curriculum development

(Clandinin & Connelly, 1988). This finding has strong implications for a model of language arts curriculum development in Barbados which involves the various stakeholder groups.

The literature suggests that philosophical statements should indicate beliefs about the purposes of education, society, the learner and the role of the teacher (Tanner & Tanner, 1995; Oliva, 1992). Using these criteria as a guide, it is argued that any philosophical statement specific to language arts instruction should possess statements of beliefs about the purposes of language arts instruction, about societal influences, about the role of the language learner and the role of the language arts teacher.

By implication, these criteria are linked to benefits of having an explicit philosophical statement (Carr & Harris, 1993; Erickson, 1995; Stevenson, 1995; Tchudi, 1991) as part of a language arts document.

Oliva (1992) describes the philosophical statement as regulatory because it guides or regulates the behaviour of those persons affected by it. Although there were no comments made by any of the groups directly to that effect, their comments could be linked to this function. According to Tanner and Tanner (1995) and Oliva (1992), respondents appeared to have understood the regulatory function since they were able to make suggestions that were consistent with the philosophical beliefs expressed in the statement.

Suggestions for Improvements to the Philosophical Statement.

All stakeholder groups who responded to the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire suggested improvements to the philosophical statement. Principals and lecturers directed their comments regarding improvements towards the teaching-learning process.

Lecturers: The teaching and learning of Language should be promoted as a pleasurable and invigorating experience; not one steeped in boredom and an overemphasis on correctness.

Principals: The philosophy could also include focus or challenges of a rapidly changing technological era in which the children must function.

I would like to see some provision in it for the teaching of phonics especially to the younger children

- 3 - 5 and 6 - 8 age groups.

Parents directed their improvements towards their own group:

Parents: Addition of parents to the list of factors key to "successful delivery of an integrated, comprehensive language arts program."

Teachers, on the other hand, expressed a view that was all encompassing:

Teachers: The statement can be improved upon by allowing it to be a philosophy shared by parents, school and community.

All of the suggestions that were made related to the improvement of the philosophical statement were ideas that would benefit children. These findings imply that all of these groups recognize and share a common goal - they want Barbadian children to benefit from English language arts instruction which is based on sound research.

For the remaining components of the language arts document, respondents were required to indicate whether they retain, modify or eliminate an item with an explanation for their choice. Where an item was retained by more than fifty per cent of group members the discussion is focused on how and why the item was modified or eliminated. It was anticipated that respondents would choose only those responses listed in the questionnaire instructions, that is, retain, modify and eliminate. However, some respondents did not choose any of the responses to some of the items. These items are represented in the tables by "NR."

Program Goals

Like the philosophical statement, multiple program goals was also a new feature of an elementary language arts syllabus for Barbados. Findings that emerged from the data suggest that multiple program goals are also viewed as significant by the participants. Recall the goals are:

One: Students will demonstrate motivation to learn and use Standard English.

Two: Students will demonstrate mastery of cumulative skills common to Standard English.

Three: Students will show respect for language variations.

Four: Students will acquire language in social situations.

Five: Students will engage in language as artistic expression.

Table 8, following, shows the distribution of stakeholder responses to the program goals. In the table R=Retain and M=Modify.

Table 8

Summary of Responses to Program Goals by Stakeholder Groups

GOAL	TEACHERS		PRINCIPALS		LECTURERS		PARENTS	
	(n = 6)		(n = 8)		(n = 2)		(n = 4)	
	R	M	R	M	R	M	R	M
One	4	2	7	1	0	2	3	1
Two	5	1	5	3	2	0	4	0
Three	5	1	7	1	2	0	4	0
Four	6	0	7	1	2	0	3	1
Five	6	0	8	0	1	1	4	0

None of the five goals were eliminated by any of the groups. Using the greater than 50% criteria, all of the goals were retained by all of the groups except lecturers. They both suggested modification of Goal One, as did two teachers, one principal and one parent for these reasons:

Lecturers: Not clear. Students will demonstrate a desire to learn to use standard English.

My problem is with the strict behaviourist language, especially in a socio-cultural context. In linguistic terms your point is valid but in socio-cultural terms it is problematic in our context. Our schools need to come to grips with the basic given of your position re. the home as the first instructional context for learning language. If what I am saying is accepted, then the implementation of the curriculum you are envisaging needs to address how the attitudinal and systemic change at the school and system level is going to be achieved.

Teachers: It should be more specific so that the teacher clearly understands the objective.

This goal needs to be clarified in light of the philosophical statement.

Further elaboration from participants would be helpful in interpreting some of the less definitive comments. The concerns of those persons who modified this goal has implications for clear definitions of the component descriptors in the revised version of the language arts document.

Principal: Needs clarification.

Parent: Explanation is unclear.

That the phrasing of the goal is to some extent unclear to members of all groups was sufficient reason for accepting the rewording suggested by one of the lecturers for the revised draft of the document. That suggestion was "Students will demonstrate a desire to learn to use standard English."

Goal Two was retained by both lecturers and parents. It was modified by one teacher and three principals for these reasons:

Teacher: It needs to be more specific.

Principals: It is not clear what is meant by this goal.
The goal is not adequately operationalized.
This [goal] was brought out in the philosophy. It must be noted that all children will not acquire mastery of skills mentioned.

As before, it would have been useful to have these respondents elaborate on their comments as a means of understanding their interpretations. What can be interpreted is that the goal needs modifying to enhance both clarity and specificity.

Some of the comments suggest that participants may not be familiar with a constructivist perspective on language and learning and this may hold implications for professional development.

As with Goal Two, both lecturers and parents unanimously retained Goal Three. One teacher and one principal modified this goal for reasons stated below:

Teacher: Teachers and students will show respect for language variations. Some teachers find it difficult to accept dialectal variations. They must be able to accept dialect and gradually help pupils to master standard English forms.

Principal: Very important.

This teacher's view is supported by the literature (Albert, 1974 cited in Branch, 1977; Vukelich, 1973). I had anticipated that more teachers and principals would have voiced some concern over this issue of language variations. Surprisingly, only one other person - a principal - seemed to be aware of the gravity of the situation:

> Students should understand and appreciate the necessity to adequately master the use of standard English (SE) if they are to communicate and learn effectively. Dialect is only adequate when communicating with a restricted group of persons in a particular community or country. The majority of experiences students will encounter in life, will require a sound grasp of SE which is a universally accepted and used language.

The comment made by the principal as a reason for modification of Goal Two could not be interpreted. Although problematic for interpreting responses, this type of comment could imply that respondents might have preferred another format for stating their reasons for modifying an item in the language arts document. It is also possible that the format of the questionnaire caused some confusion.

Goal Four was retained by both teachers and lecturers. It was modified by one principal and one parent for these reasons:

Principal: Could be modified - students will acquire and use language in social situations. Students should be exposed to varied opportunities which will allow them to interact and share ideas, information and experiences. Developing adequate language skills will attribute to positive self-esteem and self-confidence as they relate to others in different situations.

Parent: Not clearly phrased.

Students' usage of language in authentic situations is an important point to be stressed in the Barbadian context, especially since it is a goal that has not been previously addressed. The idea of authenticity of language activities may not have been understood by this parent. This can be easily addressed in the section in the actual language arts document by adding a brief statement explaining what is meant by the term and by giving an example.

Goal Five was retained by teachers, principals and parents. Only one lecturer modified it with the accompanying comment:

Lecturer: Is this an objective or an activity? Again, the behaviourist specificity may be my problem...will develop increasing competence in using language as artistic expression.

The concern of this lecturer is again valid. The document reflects a constructivist perspective and should be consistent in wording items to capture a constructivist stance

Having experienced the task of formulating these goals, I am inclined to agree with Caswell (1966) that creating curriculum components is not an easy task. Based on the response of stakeholder groups, engaging the effort of a team of qualified and interested stakeholders in developing these components is most desirable and advantageous. At some stage of the revision process, follow-up conversations with each of these participants is necessary to address their concerns in a revised draft of the language arts framework with respect to clarifying these goals.

Summary of Findings: Philosophical Statement and Program Goals

The findings show that all groups were able to express their perceived value of the philosophical statement of the language arts document. Their perceptions were categorized into three themes related to - child-centred orientation, the learning environment and the learning/teaching process. Though all their comments could be categorized accordingly, each focused on a different characteristic of the specified theme. Each group was able to make suggestions to improve the same philosophical statement. Principals and lecturers focused on the teaching/learning process and again on different aspects of this factor. Principals focused on the inclusion of technology and phonics, while lecturers focused on positive, affective features of language arts instruction. Parents focused on their own inclusion as being necessary to successful instruction and teachers suggested nation-wide adoption of the principles described in the philosophical statement. All of the goals were retained by all of the groups with the exception of Goals One and Five. The main reason for modification of a goal was lack of clarity. Comprehensibility of the goals is clearly one issue that must be addressed in revising this draft of the language arts framework. A discussion of the findings related to the objectives, activities and assessment for the 3 - 5 age group will now be presented.

The 3 to 5 Age Group

Major Objectives.

The major objectives for this age group are:

A. Participate daily in print awareness processes.

B. Participate in representation processes (for example, dramatization.)

C. Engage daily in concept building processes.

D. Participate daily in reading and writing processes.

E. Use language processes to build community.

F. Read, write, speak, and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences.

G. Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences.

None of the groups eliminated any of the major objectives for this age group. (Refer to Table 9, p. 99.) Using the greater than 50% criteria, all of the seven objectives were retained by all groups with modifications on Objectives A, B, D, and E. Objective A (Participate daily in print awareness processes.) was modified by one principal for this reason:

Principal: Too advanced for the majority of students in this age group. Unless the focus is on picture books, television activities and computer activities. Should focus on prerequisite reading and writing skills.

Although this principal talks about literacy and language tools that are current in the research literature, this comment implies a traditional, skills-based way of thinking and using skills for language arts instruction. A further implication of such a comment is that professional development may need to expose participants to a constructivist view of literacy and language learning that underpins the language arts instruction embedded in these objectives.

Objective B (Participate in representation processes, for example dramatization) was modified by one principal and one lecturer for these reasons:

Principal: Quite important. I will include repeating nursery rhymes for recall.

Lecturer: Recite nursery rhymes.

There is obviously some concern about the function of nursery rhymes. Traditionally, the 3 - 5 age group practices the recitation of nursery rhymes for recall. This might explain

the amount of concern over the absence of this objective by participants. Respondents would not have been aware that these major objectives will be elaborated upon when teams of stakeholders can cooperate to compose a more thorough document. Nonetheless, nursery rhymes are intended for this age group for more than recall and enjoyment. They are also intended to be used for the development of phonemic or phonological awareness (Olson, 1990; Sjosten-Bell, 1997; Yopp, 1992). Phonemic awareness is the conscious awareness of sound units in words. Sjosten-Bell (1997) revealed that phonemic awareness is basic to mastering the alphabetic system upon which Standard English is based. The Illinois State Board of Education (1997) found it to be among the abilities that assist in creating strong reading skills. Recent research shows that children must be given instruction in phonemic awareness (Kelly, 1997) and effective phonemic awareness instruction can begin at an early age (Grossen, 1997). It is helpful to teachers that this awareness can also be assessed (Yopp, 1995). A study by Richgels et al., (1996) shows that kindergarten children are capable of being effectively taught, and research by Olsen (1990), Sjosten-Bell (1997) and Yopp (1992) suggests that nursery rhymes are an effective means for instruction. Again, such current thinking would need to be shared with practitioners.

Objective D (Participate daily in reading and writing processes.) was modified by two teachers and one principal for reasons stated below:

Teachers:	Reading and writing will be more informal at this stage.
	Needs to be adapted to suit the 3 - 5 age group.
Principal:	Needs to be adapted to levels of children within this age range.

Table 9

Summary of Responses for Major Objectives by Group for the 3 - 5 Age Group

OBJ.	TEACHERS			PRINCIPALS			LECTURERS			PARENTS		
	n = 6			n = 8			n = 2			n = 2		
	R	M	E	R	M	E	R	M	E	R	M	E
A	6	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
B	6	0	0	7	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
C	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
D	4	2	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
E	5	1	0	7	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
F	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
G	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0

These comments again reflect a more traditional approach to the reading ability of children in this age group where reading is introduced as a series of increasingly more advanced skills with each skill being perceived as a prerequisite to the successive skill. This finding has implications for professional development. Practitioners need to be given opportunities to read and reflect on the theoretical views and research findings in the current literature related to emergent literacy with an aim to adapt their instructional methods. Wilson (1989) documents successful literacy experiences in the kindergarten classroom. (Recall that emergent literacy has already been discussed in Chapter 2.) Troyer and Yopp (1990) report findings that more experienced kindergarten teachers were less knowledgeable than inexperienced kindergarten teachers about emergent literacy concepts. The comments made thus far would suggest that this may also be true of elementary teachers in the Barbadian context. The roles of teachers and parents of kindergarten children in facilitating literacy experiences described in Reynolds (1997) and McCormick & Mason (1986).

It would be useful to have more information from participants who suggest that the objective should be adapted to the ability levels in this age group. It would be important to know how they would go about adapting the objective and how they would suggest it be written to reflect this adjustment.

Objective E (Use language processes to build community.) was modified by one teacher, two principals and one lecturer for these reasons:

Teacher: Needs to be more specific.

Principals: "Community" is a bit vague. Be more specific.

Re-define the concept of "community."

Lecturer: Use language processes to share personal experiences, knowledge, values, emotions, attitudes and opinions.

Although this objective was retained by the other respondents, their reasons were varied and related in some degree to the intended meaning. Here are some examples:

Principals: Children should be given opportunities to express themselves. Use costumes for dressing up will add. Rigid classroom settings tend to hamper pupils' development in this area.

An important objective since the child must not perceive herself as an entity unto herself but as part of community.

Teachers: Through role playing and drama, concepts and ideas become more meaningful.

Develops an awareness of the community and establishes a sense of belonging.

The term "community" was used to convey four key ideas attributed to the work of Brooks and Brooks (1993), Sergiovanni (1994) and Short and Burke (1991). They are:-

1. The classroom is a microcosm of a community. Just as members of a community cooperate for the healthy functioning of that community, a similar spirit attains in constructivist classrooms. Children engage in cooperative learning.
2. Children engage in democratic principles in a constructivist classroom - the same principles they must engage in after graduating from school.
3. Children engage in social skills and develop healthy interpersonal relationships in constructivist classrooms. These are the same skills they need to function in their jobs and in life.
4. Children develop a sense of belonging and a sense of commitment to the continuance of such a community because their contribution is valued.

This way of perceiving "community" is very important because it dictates that the power structure in classrooms becomes one where the teacher is ultimately responsible but the nature of the relationship changes from being teacher-dominated to being one of partnership. This will translate into a classroom where the roles of teacher and student interchange constantly. This will require that the teacher be confident and competent in the professional knowledge essential in such a classroom because the teacher must know how and when to mediate and scaffold learning for each child so that learning is maximized. In essence, the teacher's role is to assist each child in developing strategies for learning how to learn in a secure environment that is challenging but not frustrating.

Parents did not elaborate on reasons for retaining the objective so there is no way of knowing how they interpreted the term. However, based on the interpretations of the term "community" by the other groups, there are implications for defining the term so as to maintain consistency of meaning within and among stakeholder groups.

Experiences/Activities.

For this category respondents were required to choose 'retain,' 'modify' or 'eliminate' for each experience/activity and make a general comment in the space provided at the end of the list of experiences/activities. (Refer to Appendix C, the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire, p. 218.) Consequently, there were no specific comments on each item as in the previous section. Using the greater than 50% criteria, 9 of the 14 experiences/activities for the 3 - 5 age group were retained by all of the groups. There were modifications to 'Book Introductions,' 'Read-alongs,' 'Dictated Stories,' 'Informational Reading' and 'Informational Writing;'and eliminations of 'Dictated Stories' and Informational Writing.' (Refer to Table 10, p. 103.) Five of the 14 experiences/activities were undecided - four by lecturers and two by parents. Those undecided between lecturers were Book Introductions, Dictated Stories, Picture Stories and Informational Writing whereas Informational Reading and Informational Writing were undecided between the parents. The comments on this section were as follows:

Teachers: The above activities should prove quite useful. They should however, bear in mind the varying levels of the children in this particular age group.

If these activities and experiences are followed I think that the pupils in this age group would have a good foundation which one would be able to build upon in the remaining groups. Problems which children encounter at this age e.g. reversals of formation of letters and speech problems would also be at a minimum since the teacher would be able to plan remediation programmes. The teaching of phonics should also be introduced at this age since it helps the children in their mastery of spelling at the later stages. As a teacher in the primary school, I find that a lot more emphasis must be placed on phonics. You could look into attaining a good phonics programme throughout these age groups.

Table 10

Summary of Responses for Suggested Learning Experiences/Activities by Group for the 3 - 5 Age Group

EXP/ ACT	TEACHERS			PRINCIPALS			LECTURERS			PARENTS		
	n = 6			n = 8			n = 2			n = 2		
	R	M	E	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E	R	M	E
B. I	6	0	0	6	0	0/2/0	1	1	0	2	0	0
R.-A	5	1	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
D. S	5	1	0	5	1	0/2/0	1	0	1	2	0	0
P. S	6	0	0	8	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
R. P	6	0	0	7	0	0/1/0	2	0	0	2	0	0
O. D	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
S.& T	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
S.	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
R/D	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
O.	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
I. R	4	2	0	5	3	0	2	0	0	1	1	0
I. W	5	1	0	5	2	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
F. D	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
G. D	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0

Comments continued:

Teachers: The learning experiences/activities are suitable for the objectives given. One suggested activity would be the use of video to show stories. This would allow the child to see and hear the story - increasing their listening skills and facilitating sight by use of colour. Planned games could also be used.

Some of the suggested learning activities are too complex for 3 - 5 year-olds. Students at this age are unable to read for information. They are now being taught the basic skills and concepts and cannot master dictated stories and informational reading. These need to be modified.

Some of the above techniques are used in schools but many are often not used by teachers.

3 - 5 year old students should develop a good foundation from the experiences/activities listed.

Principals: Dictated stories for three year olds? Informational reading? Informational writing?

A fairly wide range of activities as long as teachers are willing to plan intensively.

Most of the activities are done by teachers in the classroom. However, lack of adequate resources, such as books, pictures, etc., severely restrict progress.

Informational reading, dictated stories not recommended for this age group. Read alongs - teacher-centred and depends on reading readiness. Must be skilfully done to maintain interest of children. Informational writing - inappropriate for this age group - teacher-centred. Children are developing only basic writing skills at this age. Picture stories can be extended to include, use of television and computer related activity (software is available). Through this medium children will learn to think critically, expand vocabulary, develop speech skills, etc.

If this programme is implemented it should mean an overall improvement in the children as they would have a wide variety of experiences. I notice that "Phonics" is missing. Don't you

think that this should play a part here?

Generally, the above should prove useful to the age group, bearing in mind that adjustments should be made to accommodate varying levels within the age range.
The suggested learning experiences/activities mentioned are worthwhile. I will add a few more: building of experience charts; reading from a variety of books - library (School / Public); sharing ideas from books read; oral and written comprehension. Written (5 years). Expositions e.g. how to make a glass of lemonade. The actual items can be brought into the classroom - children will see and experience the process (multi-sensory approach).

Lecturers: Where is literacy i.e. relatedness of language arts being focussed on e.g. reading-writing? Shouldn't personal writing be included? In fact, shouldn't it be the foundation? Writing can be a tool for understanding and explaining their world.

The activities are varied and provide scope for cognitive, aesthetic and personal responses.

Parent: [Informational Reading] by whom? [Informational Writing] at this age?

These comments generally illustrated a mix of attitudes to the activities suggested. Planning and resources were indicated as factors which could impact on the success of the program should it be implemented. Lecturers were the only group to view these activities as suitable for this age group. One member from each of the other groups indicated uncertainty about the abilities of children in this age group in coping especially with 'Informational Reading' and 'Informational Writing.' Research by Rich (1998) implies that children in this age group are capable of reading exposition.

Not only can some children in this age group read on entering school but researchers such as Clay (1991), Ferrerio and Teberosky (1982), Goodman and Goodman (1981) and Wells (1986) among others, concur that children in this age group possess book knowledge and are aware of print in their surroundings. The latter, referred to as environmental print (Ehri, 1985; Hall, 1987; Strictland & Morrow, 1988; Vukelich, 1994) is the beginnings of a

process of acquiring the schema for constructing the structural organization of informational text.

Not only are children in this age group knowledgeable about print, they are knowledgeable about writing as well, and exhibit behaviours that approximate literate adults to varying degrees characteristic of emergent literacy (Clay, 1991; Hall, 1987; Meek, 1982; Sulzby & Teale, 1986).

Teachers need training to assess children's abilities on entering school and provide these children with the appropriate experiences that promote their language and literacy growth. The comments made in relation to this age group suggest that practitioners may not be familiar with concepts of emergent literacy. The language arts framework proposed in this study provides the support teachers will need as they engage in professional growth and encourage emergent literacy.

Based on the comments of these stakeholders, it appears that both practitioners and parents modified items from a skills-based orientation. Collectively, these findings have implications for providing assistance to both practitioners and parents in understanding emergent literacy.

Also worthy of note, is that some group members highlighted the potential of the language arts framework as a preventative medium in relation to "remediation." In addition, the suggestions that were made were generally consistent with those in the proposed language arts framework. These findings imply that there are positive attitudes towards the framework.

Assessment Opportunities.

Recall that for assessment to be presented in a language arts document and in this manner is another new feature for a language arts curriculum in Barbados. As for the previous section, general comments were expected from respondents after they chose their options for the items in the assessment opportunities. (Refer to Appendix C, p. 218). Using the greater than 50% criteria, none of the 6 assessment opportunities were eliminated by any group. (Refer to Table 11 p.108). 'Anecdotal Records' was the only assessment opportunity to be retained by all groups. Four assessment opportunities were undecided (retain-eliminate) between parents and one - 'Teacher Observations' was undecided between lecturers because

one lecturer modified it and the other retained it. Comments for this section were as follows:

Teachers: Quite relevant. Provision should, however, be made for the involvement of the parent since the parent is recognized as the child's first language teacher.

These are very good for the teacher as well as the pupils for good record keeping in identifying learning problems and planning remediation programmes. This record keeping can follow the child from class to class. Each teacher the child comes into contact with, would have no problem in identifying his strengths and weaknesses.

Portfolios could be confused with work samples. I believe that care must be taken in this area when dealing with this 3 - 5 age group.

The assessment opportunities assist the teacher in monitoring the child's weaknesses and strengths. The teacher is able to provide remediation programs for students.

Recording is usually left for end-of-term examinations, which do not show and accurate assessment of the child's progress. The range of assessment opportunities should allow the teacher to better assess each student, identify his/her strengths and weaknesses and determine suitable remediation where necessary. With this type of on-going assessment parents are better able to come into the school and have constructive feedback on the child's progress.

Principals: This group needs a lot of visual and oral language skills development. Activities should be geared along these lines for better results.

Assessment should be on-going and should not be confined only to examination conditions. The above forms of assessment afford the opportunity to assess children in an informal and stress-free situation.

Table 11

Summary of Responses for Assessment Opportunities by Group for the 3 - 5 Age Group

AS'T OPP	TEACHERS			PRINCIPALS			LECTURERS			PARENTS		
	n = 6			n = 8			n = 2			n = 2		
	R	M	E/NR	R	M	E/NR	R	M	E/NR	R	M	E/NR
T. O	6	0	0	8	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
W. P	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1
L. F	6	0	0	7	0	0/1	2	0	0	1	0	1
T-p. C	6	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	1
W. S	6	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1
A. R	6	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0

Teacher Observations: the most effective method of evaluating children in this age range. Teacher is able to appraise the behaviour and responses of children at work and at play, by self or in a group activity and in variety of situations. Strengths can be detected and enhanced or developed and weaknesses or defects remedied. Portfolios: a method of accumulating students' work and monitoring their progress (by teachers, parents and students themselves). They should focus on the positive and strengths of each child in order for students to experience success and achievement. Can be used as building blocks for future success (success breeds success). Writing skills mostly art expression, patterns, scribbles, letter formations, etc. Work Samples: can be used as references for diagnosing, making referrals and for planning. Samples carefully collected over a period of time, should reflect the progress, strengths, weakness of the child. This method can be used as formative appraisal at teacher-pupil conferences: can take the form of informal conversations, or discussions or chats about samples of child's work or portfolios. If skilfully used teacher is able to assess the level or stage of the child's language development. Anecdotal Records: this is a necessary method of assessment. Teacher deals with a large number of children and may find difficulty in recalling specific details about each child. Teacher is able to note specific behaviours at specific times and situations. Can be used to monitor the progress of students and for reference in discussions with parents, and other teachers.

The activities suggested above are useful. Teacher-pupil conferences at this stage would have to be very informal. Some pupils at this stage "clam up" when in a one-to-one situation.

This should provide a wide variety of assessment opportunities for the teachers. These would also be records to be kept and passed on from class to class.

Provision should also be made for parent involvement for information sharing, feedback, clarifications and implementations of measures.

The assessment opportunities can all be retained. Although at some schools some of the above is done, there is need to make

it policy for all schools. With the introduction of teacher appraisal more of this practice will be seen in the nation's schools. The "sheet" report given to children at this stage does not convey to parents any significant progress of children. The above listed opportunities should be taken seriously if we are to monitor and improve language development in our primary schools and by extension, secondary and tertiary levels.

Lecturer: Teacher observations may be too subjective if no structured objective framework is available. Observation checklists may be more appropriate.

Parent: Several of these 'opportunities' i.e. writing portfolios, literacy folders, work samples seem to suggest that children in this age range will be producing written work to be assessed in these ways. I think assessment at this level should be based more on observation.

The comments were varied but generally were very positive. Practitioners were especially favourable to the type of assessment suggested. They were very aware of the benefits of instruction-related, on-going, process-based assessment and appropriate record keeping. One principal, in particular, seemed very knowledgeable about the assessment opportunities. These findings imply strong receptivity to the assessment opportunities by these practitioners and lecturers. The concerns of the parent hold implications for educating the public regarding the characteristics of the assessment opportunities and the manner in which they will be deployed in language arts instruction. The concern of the lecturer regarding the subjectivity of Teacher Observations could be easily addressed during professional development.

Summary of Findings: 3 - 5 Age Group

No major objectives were eliminated. Using the greater than 50% criteria, all but 2 of the 7 major objectives were retained by the majority of group members. Objectives B and E were undecided (retain-modify) between lecturers. Teachers retained all of the 7 objectives with modifications on Objectives D and E. Principals retained all of the objectives with modifications on Objectives A, B, D and E. Lecturers retained 5 of the 7 objectives with modifications on Objectives B and E. Parents retained all of the objectives without any

modifications. Major objectives were modified generally because the activities implied by them were thought to be inappropriate for this age group. Other reasons included concern over the memorization of poems and the use of the term "community."

Nine of the 14 suggested learning experiences/activities were also retained by the majority of group members. 'Book Introductions,' 'Dictated Stories,' 'Picture Stories' and 'Informational Writing' were undecided (retain-modify) between lecturers and' Informational Reading' and 'Informational Writing' were similarly undecided between parents. 'Dictated Stories' was eliminated by one principal and 'Informational Writing' was also eliminated by one principal.

Comments about the experiences/activities were also varied. Some respondents thought the activities were too advanced for the age group while others thought they were suitable and provided a stable foundation on which the activities of the other age groups could build. Mention was made that some of these activities were being used in some schools and should be encouraged in all schools. The need for strategic planning for the successful implementation of these activities was emphasized. The absence of "phonics" was also highlighted.

Four of the 6 assessment opportunities were eliminated by one parent and one was modified by one lecturer. One of the 6 assessment opportunities were retained by all groups - 'Anecdotal Records. Teachers and principals retained all of the assessment opportunities. Practitioners were very articulate about the benefits to children, parents and teachers of assessment which is child-centred and success- and instruction-oriented. One parent expressed strong disapproval of all of the assessment opportunities except 'Teacher Observations' and 'Anecdotal Records.' One lecturer showed a strong preference for 'Observation Checklists' as a substitute for 'Teacher Observations.'

The 6 to 8 Age Group

Major Objectives.

Using the greater than 50% criteria, none of the major objectives were eliminated. Refer to Table 12, p. 113. Eight of the 11 major objectives were retained by all groups. The remaining three major objectives (A, E and K) were undecided (retain-modify) between

lecturers. One teacher and one principal each eliminated Objective H. The comments which accompanied modifications and eliminations are as follows, according to Objective A: Participate daily in print awareness processes.

> Lecturer: Difficult to respond - not clear about the qualitative differentiation which in my view should exist e.g. by 8 years [Modification].

This point is valid and must be addressed. In the professional development for implementing this program, each teacher needs to become familiar with the phases that children experience in acquiring language and literacy. As the document is revised and the various stakeholders make their contributions, the major objectives will be described so that these developmental differences are explicit.

Objective D: Participate daily in reading and writing processes.

> Principals: Children do not necessarily have to engage in writing activity everyday [Modification].
>
> As mentioned in "A," it does not necessarily mean that children should write in every language lesson.

This comment has implications for teacher professional development in relation to the interpretation of the document. Reading and writing should be everyday activities in the classroom (Butler & Turbill, 1984) as intended in the document. This does not mean that the teacher has to see that writing and assess it everyday. Writing in this proposed language arts document takes many forms and serves many purposes. The basis for the daily writing is that children learn to write by writing. It is desirous that in-school writing be meaningful and relate to the child's learning and life experiences.

Table 12

Summary of Responses for Major Objectives by Group for the 6 - 8 Age Group

OBJ	TEACHERS			PRINCIPALS			LECTURERS			PARENTS		
	n = 5			n = 8			n = 2			n = 2		
	R	M	E/NR	R	M	E/NR	R	M	E/NR	R	M	E/NR
A	5	0	0	8	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
B	5	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
C	5	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
D	5	0	0	6	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
E	4	1	0	6	2	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
F	5	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
G	5	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
H	3	1	1/0	4	2	1/1	2	0	0	1	0	0/1
I	5	0	0	6	1	0/1	2	0	0	2	0	0
J	5	0	0	6	1	0/1	2	0	0	2	0	0
K	5	0	0	6	1	0/1	1	1	0	2	0	0

Objective E: Use language processes to build community.

Principal: Redefine or clarify the concept of "community." [Modification]

Teacher: Needs to be more specific. [Modification]

Lecturer: See 3 - 5 years comment - Use language processes to share personal experiences, knowledge, values, emotions, attitudes and opinions. [Modification]

The issue of building community has already been addressed in the 3 - 5 age group.

Objective H: Relate one literary work to another

Teacher: You must modify this - be more specific. [Modification]

Students may not be ready for this. [Elimination]

Principals: Inappropriate for this age group. [Elimination]

What is intended by this objective is not clear. [Modification]

For two responses further information would be needed to clarity what was intended. It is also possible that some practitioners might have interpreted this objective to mean "literary criticism." Again further information would have been useful. The other two responses suggest a traditional maturation-based perception of children's capabilities for this age group and holds implications for professional development. This objective was introduced in this age group because most children would, by now, have developed the ability to relate one literary text to another with similar features. They would by now be experiencing many different kinds of stories, nursery rhymes, poems and informational texts and know the main features of each kind of literary work. They would know the structures of story and of informational texts. The ability to relate one literary work to another is called intertextuality (Cairney, 1990; DeBeaugrande, 1980, and Meek, 1988). Children's authors such as Janet and Allan Ahlberg are aware of this ability in children and have created books for children based on this feature. Response to this objective would need further clarification to know how to explain it and/or provide professional development.

Objective I: Use language processes to discover and explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and

experiences.

Principal: Could be modified - Use language processes to discover, explore and express thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.

Although the major objectives were retained by the majority of stakeholders, some group members exhibited misgivings about specific objectives because of lack of clarity or for reasons related to their philosophical views. Given that there may be differing philosophical views about children's language development and abilities, educating stakeholders is crucial before requesting them to respond to the proposed innovation.

Experiences/Activities.

There were no experiences/activities that were eliminated using the greater than 50% criteria. (Refer to Table 13, p. 117.) Ten of the 14 experiences/activities were retained by all groups with modifications on 5 and elimination of one. 'Book Introductions,' 'Read-alongs,' 'Picture Stories,' and 'Open-ended Discussions' were undecided (retain-modify) between the lecturers and retained by all of the other groups. Comments for this section were as follows:

Teachers: Since the 6 - 8 year olds would have been exposed to these activities in the 3 - 5 year group, they would now be able to operate at a higher level. Pupils entering school late would not miss out on these valuable experiences.

I think the learning experiences/activities to be suitable. I would suggest just slight variation in giving directions and following directions.

Phonics must be highlighted. It must be planned in the curriculum. These learning experiences and activities are good for this age group.

These activities assist in the development of the child. They should, however, be adapted to suit the needs and varying levels of the children in the 6 - 8 age group.

Principals: Listening to audio recorded stories, televised stories or films could be added since more technology will be introduced in the classroom and will capture the attention and interest of students. A number of the suggested activities will be

effective if cooperative learning or teaching strategies are selected.

If this programme is implemented it should mean an overall improvement in the children as they would have a wide variety of experiences. I notice that "Phonics" is missing. Don't you think that this should play a part here?

The learning activities and experiences suggested are meaningful and should be broadened in their application.

The term 'Book Introductions' (teacher initiated), I am not too sure what will be the role of the teacher here. I, however say, that at this age children should have the right to choose a variety of literature from libraries etc., and share ideas with classmates, etc. Journal writing which is an excellent practice, is not done in every school. Book selection procedures - this is by the way. Storytelling is done but in-depth discussions are quite low-keyed. Self-evaluation procedures - need for inclusion in the curriculum.

Lecturer: Generally, these activities would allow students to build on concepts developed in the early grades. However, the activities do not reflect how technology such as video, radio, computers and the Internet could be used as starting points for activities. Additionally, language games such as scrabble, crosswords and wordfinds could be included. Journal writing could also be introduced at this stage.

Parent: Activities are varied and interesting. Might add though, exposure to "real-life writers" and people who use language creatively as their job - journalists, storytellers, commentators, etc., coming into the classroom and interacting with the students.

As with the 3 - 5 age group, comments were very favourable. Recall that in the major objectives for this age group, a lecturer suggested a modification on Objective A because the "qualitative differentiation" was not explicit. Note that this aspect was understood by the practitioner groups as suggested by their comments. That this concern was not raised by practitioners might be explained by the nature of practitioners' thinking.

Table 13

Summary of Responses for Experiences/Activities by Group for the 6 - 8 Age Group

ACT'Y	TEACHERS			PRINCIPALS			LECTURERS			PARENTS		
	n = 5			n = 8			n = 2			n = 2		
	R	M	E	R	M	E/NR	R	M	E	R	M	E
B. I	5	0	0	7	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
R-A	5	0	0	7	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
D. S	5	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
P. S	5	0	0	8	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
R. P	5	0	0	8	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
O. D	5	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
S. & T	5	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
S.	5	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
R. P./D.	5	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
O.	5	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
I. R	5	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
I. W	5	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
F. D.	4	1	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
G. D	4	1	0	7	0	0/1	2	0	0	2	0	0

This could be explored in a further study as a means of understanding differences in perceptions on curriculum development between lecturers and practitioners. The practitioners in this study possessed more than 10 years' teaching experience and would have a working knowledge of qualitative differences but it would be necessary to indicate these differences for novice teachers.

Suggestions for modifications were consistent with constructivist philosophy and will be added to the list of suggested experiences/activities for the revised draft of the language arts framework. As noted in the 3 - 5 age group, one principal had consistently expressed views that are consistent with those undergirding the language arts framework. These findings have implications for potential networking and establishing eventual school-based teams. During the second meeting, two principals were present and discussed projects they had initiated in their schools. If they had been networking, they would have been able to enrich their programs with ideas from each other and provide support for each other.

The phonics issue surfaced again in this age group. Phonics was not mentioned in the document because it should be taught in meaningful contexts as one strategy often used for identifying or spelling words that are unfamiliar. It should not be taught as sets of rules to be practiced. If the need arises and enough children in a class are having problems with a particular word family or pattern, direct teaching in a mini-lesson (Atwell,1998; Tompkins & Hoskisson, 1995; Weaver, 1996) would be appropriate.

Assessment Opportunities.

Using the greater than 50% criteria, there were no assessment opportunities eliminated. (Refer to Table 14, p. 122.) 'Teacher Observations' were undecided (retain-modify) between the lecturers and between the parents and 'Holistic Scoring' was undecided (retain-modify) among principals. All other assessment opportunities were retained by all groups. Comments for assessment opportunities were:

Teachers: For this age group assessment can also be through testing.

Please modify and explain these terms. Other assessment procedures are very good for the teacher's use. With these assessment opportunities there should be fewer children having problems with all the components which form part of

the acquisition of standard English. The overall benefit would be well-rounded pupils who would have very little difficulty in acquiring and using standard English.

Parent involvement is critical in the total development of the child. Teacher-teacher conferences are also necessary since the child's previous teachers can pass on relevant information.

Principals: [Peer conferences] Not highly recommended for this age group since children can be insensitive or over-sensitive, at times tactless. Constructive criticism or innocent efforts to help may result in conflict. This method of assessment may possibly work to some extent with the 9 - 11 age group if children are trained and understand its value. Even then it must be carefully monitored by teachers in order not to destroy self-esteem of weaker students. It is a strategy which is highly recommended for secondary students.

This is similar to the assessment opportunities for the 3 - 5 age group.

Parent involvement as well as teacher involvement, especially previous teachers of the student(s) [useful]. Pupil-pupil is also valid.

All these opportunities are worthwhile. These practices are not common to all schools. I believe that the above will be part of the curriculum. There is need for a serious look in assessing the development of all children.

Lecturer: Appropriate strategies suggested. Primary Trait Scoring and Evaluation Checklists may also be included.

Parent: Assessment opportunities do not include assessment of oral language skills. Could this perhaps include speech contests, etc.?

Comments revealed differences in opinion among group members and between groups and the ideas intended by the language arts framework. Although few group members indicated unfamiliarity with 'Holistic Scoring,' it is possible that non-responses were also signs of unfamiliarity with the terminology used in this section. These findings suggest that these assessment opportunities should be described so that stakeholders understand what is meant by the terms used in the language arts framework. A glossary at the end of the document would be a possibility.

Although parents are not part of assessment opportunities, it is clear that some practitioners are of the opinion that parents should be involved in assisting in the implementation of strategies for helping the child with language learning and literacy. This finding has implications for parent-teacher partnerships. Epstein (1984, 1995, 1997) elaborates on parent-teacher relationships with suggestions and guidelines for maintaining effective partnerships. A related finding is the desire of parents, in this exploration, to become involved in their children's language arts instruction. These are the kind of issues related to instruction that need to be addressed when educating the stakeholders.

The absence of testing was emphasized in the responses and was suggested for inclusion. Testing was deliberately omitted from the document in order to have participants focus on the new assessment strategies in the document. Both formal and informal assessment have been recognized in the document in the philosophical statement and in the inclusion of standardized testing. Informal assessment has been highlighted because it best complements and informs instruction.

One principal expressed the view that 'Peer conferencing' could be problematic for sensitive children. These concerns are legitimate. There are guidelines for introducing and conducting peer conferences (Cooper, 1993; Dahl, 1988) in order to prevent problems. These guidelines may need to be made available to teachers and principals.

Another important concern was the observation made by one parent that oral language development was not being assessed. Reed (1983) elaborates on the assessment of children's oral and written language and listening skills. Work samples can consist of oral language as well as written language. Tape-recorded samples of children's oral readings or oral presentations (Chan, 1989; Tompkins & McGee, 1993) can be used for assessing children's oral language. The implication from this finding is that it is important to present information to clarify misconceptions. This is an example of how cooperation through communication of views, helps to make for better understanding for all stakeholders. By extension, this kind of feedback will make for a much improved document.

Summary of Findings: 6 - 8 Age Group

None of the major objectives were eliminated for the 6 - 8 age group. Eight of the 11 major objectives were retained by all groups and 3 of the 11 major objectives were undecided (retain-modify) between the two lecturers. Four issues were highlighted in this section. One was that the language arts framework does not qualitatively distinguish between one age group and another when the objective occurs in a previous age group. A second issue was the questioning of "daily" by practitioners for objectives that request daily reading and writing. A third was that some participants were finding the use of the term "community" problematic and requested that the concept be clarified. The final issue was that some practitioners questioned whether students in the 6 - 8 age group were capable of relating one literary text to another.

There were no experiences/activities that were eliminated for the 6 - 8 age group. Ten of the 14 experiences/activities were retained by all groups. Four of the 14 activities were undecided (retain-modify) between the lecturers and retained by all of the other groups. Participants thought the experiences/activities were generally appropriate for this age group. Comments, however, revealed inconsistencies in language arts instruction among schools. Some schools were exposing their students to process-oriented approaches while others were utilizing a more skills-based orientation.

There were no assessment opportunities eliminated. 'Teacher Observations' were undecided (retain-modify) between the lecturers and between the parents, and 'Holistic Scoring' was undecided (retain-modify) among principals. 'Holistic Scoring' was the only assessment opportunity to be modified. It was modified by teachers. All other assessment opportunities were retained by all of the groups.

Five issues were highlighted by stakeholders in this section of the document. It was observed that testing was not included and it was felt that it should be included in the language arts framework. The terms that were used were not familiar to some participants. Peer conferencing was not favoured by one principal. Another noted the similarity of the assessment opportunities between the 6 - 8 age group and the 3 - 5 age group and one parent thought oral language development was not being assessed.

Table 14

Summary of Responses for Assessment Opportunities by Group for the 6 - 8 Age Group

A. O	TEACHERS			PRINCIPALS			LECTURERS			PARENTS		
	n = 5			n = 8			n = 2			n = 2		
	R	M	E	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E	R	M	E
T. O	5	0	0	8	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0
W. P	4	0	1	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
T-p C	5	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
W. S	5	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
L. F	5	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
A. R	5	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	0
P. C	4	0	1	6	1	0/1	2	0	0	2	0	0
H. S	1	3	0/1	2	2	0/3/1	2	0	0	1	1	0

These findings hold implications for educating stakeholders about the features of the language arts document.

The 9 to 11 Age Group

For this section only 4 of the 6 teachers responded but all four of the parents responded.

Major Objectives.

Four of the 15 major objectives were retained by all of the groups. (Refer to Table 15, p. 125.) Of the remaining 11 objectives all were modified by principals, one was undecided (retain-modify) between lecturers, one was queried by a parent. All other members of groups retained them. Comments for the major objectives were as follows:

Objective A: Participate daily in print awareness processes.

Teacher:	Common entrance examination is a hindrance to such activities.
Principals:	This will further orientate students towards the wider world of literature.
Principal:	The integrated approach will enhance this area. Free writing expressions.
Parent:	He needs to practice.

Objective B: Listen to and dramatize stories and other literary forms.

Teachers:	Teachers concentrate on form in grammar and mathematical concepts. Thus these activities are seldom done in this age group.
Principals:	This will add richer or deeper meaning to the printed pages.
	Children can also write their stories for dramatization.
Lecturer:	I like the expansion 'and other literary forms' meets my often repeated concern that direct intervention to expand pupils' language further is essential. A 100% revolutionary approach can be socially unjust!
Parent:	Aids understanding and memory.

Objective C: Engage daily in concept building processes.

Parent: Helps to expand on vocabulary.
Principals: The scope could be broadened for this age group.

Concept building should be done daily - concepts can be derived from a wide range of subjects.

Objective D: Participate daily in reading and writing processes.

Parent: Cannot have one without the other.

Principal: This will provide further preparation for more formal language activity later.

Objective E: Use language processes to build community.

Parent: To help strengthen student abilities and relationship with other children.

Principal: Modify or clarify application of this term "community."

Objective F: Read, write, speak, and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences.

Parent: To improve child's ability to read and speak confidently at any time.

Principal: This addresses the functional use of language.

Objective G: Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences.

Parent: Training the child to think and analyse possible situations.

Principal: Discovery tends to generate ideas, questions discussions, interpretations, etc.

Objective H: Relate one literary work to another.

Parent: Being able to relate similar stories or situations. Helps child to think.

Principal: This would help to stimulate an awareness of the scope of resource material.

Objective I: Use language processes to discover and explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.

Table 15

Summary of Responses to Major Objectives by Group for the 9 - 11 Age Group

OBJ'S	TEACHERS			PRINCIPALS			LECTURERS			PARENTS		
	n = 4			n = 8			n = 2			n = 4		
	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?
A	4	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
B	4	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
C	4	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
D	4	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
E	4	0	0	5	3	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
F	4	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
G	4	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
H	4	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
I	4	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
J	4	0	0	6	2	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
K	4	0	0	5	2	0/0/1	1	1	0	4	0	0
L	4	0	0	5	2	0/0/1	2	0	0	4	0	0
M	4	0	0	6	2	0	2	0	0	3	0	0/0/1
N	4	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
O	4	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0

Parent: Helps child to understand themselves and situations relating to experiences and feelings.

Principal: This is valid since it underscores language as very significant in the development of the self.

This would help in their creativity.

Objective J: Use language processes to comprehend and respond personally and critically to literary and media texts.

Parents: Helps child to form and express opinions.

Principals: This would help their comprehension and in their discussions.

Language development will be enhanced by this approach.

Objective K: Use language processes to manage ideas and information.

Parent: Knowing how to organize ideas so message can be understood.

Principals: This would help in self-evaluation and presentations.

The management of information and ideas is pertinent, given the increasing impact of information technology.

Objective L: Use language processes to enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.

Parent: Helps students to express ideas clearly and in different ways.

Principal: This would improve their creativity.

Objective M: Use rubrics to evaluate their language arts strategies and products for self-improvement.

Parent: What are rubrics?

Principal: A good idea.

Objective N: Use language processes to choose and research a topic both individually and as a team member.

Parent: Student should know what to do when there is a topic they need to find information on.

Principal: This encourages the team spirit.

Objective O: Participate in test-taking procedures with collaborative evaluation.

Parent: Prepares them for dealing with test conditions.

Principals: This would help in their Common Entrance exam.

The objectives are all worthwhile objectives - time allotted and other unpredicted circumstances do not allow for all the above to be met.

The comments made in relation to the major objectives were varied and generally highlighted the benefits of the objectives to students in addition to areas of concern. Stakeholders tended to interpret major objectives differently. This has implications for the proposed curriculum development model.

Practitioners noted the benefits of major objectives in enhancing and promoting children's language development. The functional use of language in the school setting was highlighted. This attitude should assist children in understanding that school literacy is compatible with out-of-school literacy as teachers promote the relatedness of the two. Research by Abt-Perkins et al. (1996), Pelligrini et al. (1994) suggest that instruction that connects the two is beneficial to the child. Language as development of self was also mentioned. This perspective of language use was discussed in Chapter 2.

Language and technology was an issue raised by one of the lecturers. For a practitioner to conclude that management of ideas was essential in a technological age was encouraging.

It was also noted that the presence of the Common Entrance examination was a threat to the realization of language arts instruction as proposed for the 9 - 11 age group. It was revealed that some practitioners are of the view that the common entrance examination is an inhibitive factor to children's language instruction. This finding is consistent with situations where standardized testing is a prominent form of assessment. Instruction is ultimately geared to "teaching to the test" (Bushweller, 1997; National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 1992). When the quality of teaching is measured by students' performance on a test, this is a likely reaction of teachers (National Center for Fair and Open Testing, 1992).

It is possible that teaching to the test is behaviour likely to contribute to the failure of some primary school children who need the kind of instruction described in the proposed language arts framework - the kind of instruction which engages these students in constructing the habits of confident, independent learners.

Experiences/Activities.

Using the greater than 50% criteria, 27 of the 31 experiences/activities for the 9 - 11 age group were retained by all groups. (Refer to Table 16, p. 133.) Four of the 31 experiences/activities were undecided - three retain-modify and one retain-eliminate - between lecturers. These were: 'Dictated Stories,' 'Graphic Representation,' 'Picture Stories,' and 'Presentations.' Principals opted to give no response or to make queries more often than any other group for this section. Comments for this section were:

Teachers: Modify [Storytelling] depending on the type. The above activities are for the ideal situation. Many of these however, are not used in this age range again because of common entrance constraints.

Students continue to build on previous learning experiences as new experiences/activities are introduced.

Phonics must be taught. A programme must be put in place for this age group. Like the other age groups I am in total agreement with the learning activities and experiences. I can see how the teacher is able to build upon what has been taught at each age group. Fewer problems if any, because they would be easily identified and corrected.

Principals: Make clearer [Novel Study]. Specify what is meant [Author's Circle]. Specify what is meant [Reader's Theatre]. The activities suggested are suitable.

The open-ended discussions, it is assumed, will be still under the guidance of the teacher whose objectives are clearly defined. Novel study: it is assumed that there is guided selection in both scope and length.

The activities are quite wide. From these activities you can see that they are child-centred. Teacher tends to become facilitator rather than the lecturer/tutor. The Common

Entrance testing procedure as it exists will eliminate most of the activities listed above. I am not quite in favour of the test, but until a better method can be found, I think it can be retained. As mentioned before this test - Maths & English - does not give teachers enough scope to do a good job with the other activities.

Lecturers: What is the purpose of the "common entrance testing procedures?" Sticks out like a sore thumb.

The experiences are based on whole pieces of purposeful writing, reading and speaking activities, rather than on grammar exercises and workbooks.

Parents: Here are areas I think could have been beneficial to me at my stage of learning, but was not exposed to them. Therefore, I think my child should benefit if all these activities were practiced daily or as much as possible. Especially areas where he can be stimulated to think and listen and react positively with others.

I believe that more attention should be paid to reading, spelling, time management and independent thought. The students who complete assignments quickly should be allowed to proceed.

Modify [Reciting Poems] and critiquing poems. Need to encourage use of wider variety of sources for information and exposure to different kinds of language use, e.g. newspapers, television news documentaries... Students at this age might be involved in play writing for production by classmates not just role playing/dramatizing. [Acceptable suggestions] "Sample common entrance exam" seems somehow out of place here, as there are no other formal assessment opportunities used.

It was noted that the Common Entrance examination seemed to be a misfit in the language arts framework. To have developed an English language arts framework without treating this examination as a significant part would be unrealistic. Over the past year there has been much discussion concerning the abolition of this examination when Barbadians became aware that the Jamaican equivalent would no longer be in existence. The Minister of Education has expressed the view that the examination will still be in existence in the near

future. Two realistic approaches could have been taken in dealing with this issue in the language arts framework. One is that it could be assumed that the common entrance examination would be re-designed so as to complement the other assessment opportunities in the document. The second one is that students could be prepared for the examination in the final year of elementary school. The latter was more practical because it engages students in behaviours that have long-term benefits for life-long learning unlike the other option. Convincing policy makers of reasons for re-constructing the standardized Common Entrance examination to reflect a process-orientation is a time-consuming process and is the ultimate goal. This option maintains consistency and coherence in the document.

For this component of the framework, parents responded specifically in relation to their particular set of circumstances as related to their child or children or to their own school experiences. It is not intended that poems be critiqued in the traditional sense of critiquing. Children will be encouraged to compare and contrast poems as part of the experience of appreciating poetry. The other suggestions made by the last parent were consistent with the philosophy of the language arts framework. Educating stakeholders as to the tenets of constructivism again emerged as crucial. This should assist them in understanding that some of their suggestions may not be compatible with the principles of the philosophy undergirding the language arts framework. This action might also stimulate workable ideas from other stakeholders.

Assessment Opportunities.

Using the greater than 50% criteria, 7 of the 8 assessment opportunities were retained by all of the groups. (Refer to Table 17, p. 135.) There were no eliminations. 'Teacher Observations' was undecided (retain-modify) between lecturers. Principals did not modify any assessment opportunities. Instead queries were made and there were non responses. 'Holistic Scoring' was the only assessment opportunity and the only item on the questionnaire, to be queried by a majority of group members. Parents were the group. The comments for this section were as follows:

Teachers: Tests must be included as a form of assessment.

As stated previously, the above would be useful, but, teachers of this age group seldom have time to do these.

The portfolio is more suited for the 6 - 8 or 9 - 11 age groups than for the 3 - 5 age group.
With these assessment opportunities the teachers would know the kind of pupils which would be going on to the secondary level. This record keeping could also follow the child. The teachers at the secondary schools would know the kind of pupils they will be receiving and they too, can plan their teaching based on the individual report of the children.

Principals: Most of what is proposed should prove very useful if it was done. However, the reality of the situation is that at this age group, the focus is primarily on "doing well' in the Common Entrance Examination. This is to detriment of all else.

This should provide a wide variety of assessment opportunities for the teachers. These would also be records to be kept and passed on from class to class. These are similar to the assessment opportunities for the 3 - 5 age group. In addition, records would be able to be passed onto the secondary school so that teachers could see the strengths and weaknesses of these pupils.

It is assumed that there will be an integrated approach to assessment, with appropriate weight given to specific areas.

Principals: The opportunities listed are quite useful. Portfolios, work samples, etc., can be transferred to secondary school level to allow a smooth transfer. Many pupils find it difficult to adjust because too much is expected from them. Teachers, on the other hand, will find it easier to manage (mainly in first form). I do believe that we have to take a serious look at the whole curriculum. It will entail training or retraining of teachers if we want to bring about a change.

Lecturers: I think the teacher has several complementary roles. Think of it as a set of assessment strategies. The essence of good strategy is its conditional nature - know 'when' and know 'why.' I see an orientation here of anything not fitting into classical 'whole language.' I think the socio-cultural realities require things that do not fit into classical 'whole language'.

I also have 'management' of assessment concern - how will our teachers do all of this on an on-going basis with existing "resources" broadly conceptualized. The 'opportunities' per se are current and comprehensive but I have difficulty with assessment opportunities because you do not show how they translate into assessment practices that are differentiated according to purposes, etc. Will assessment ever be summative or formal, or is all of that 'out'? Is analytic scoring 'out'? Is direct teaching 'out'?

The assessment opportunities are appropriate, but the following procedures may be added: Primary Trait Scoring, Evaluation Checklists, Comment Feedback, Group Evaluation and Self-evaluation.

Parent: I am not sure to what extent the 'opportunities' listed will allow for assessment of students' comprehension of things read, knowledge of language rules, spelling, etc., on which the C. E. examination will be based. Judging from the objectives and activities suggested, the C. E. examination as currently structured does not fit in.

As anticipated, practitioners accepted the experiences/activities for this age group but emphasized the importance of validating the Common Entrance examination even though they were aware of the benefits of the other activities in the long-term. To account for this possibility, the framework was designed in a spiral format so that by the age of 11, all the necessary groundwork strategies for independent learning would have become automatized for students.

Table 16

Summary Responses to Experiences/Activities by Group for the 9 - 11 Age Group

ACT'Y	TEACHERS			PRINCIPALS			LECTURERS			PARENTS		
	n = 4			n = 8			n = 2			n = 4		
	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?
D. S	4	0	0	8	0	0	1	0	1/0/0	4	0	0
G. R	4	0	0	7	1	0	1	1	0	4	0	0
P. S	4	0	0	8	0	0	1	1	0	4	0	0
R. P	4	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	3	1	0
O. D	4	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
S. & T	4	0	0	6	2	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
S.	3	1	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
R. /D	4	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
I. R	4	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
I. W	4	0	0	7	1	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
F. D	4	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
G. D	4	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
O.	4	0	0	8	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0
N. S	3	1	0	5	2	1/0/0	2	0	0	4	0	0
P.	4	0	0	7	0	0/1/0	1	1	0	4	0	0
G. R	4	0	0	7	1	0	1	1	0	4	0	0

ACT'Y	TEACHERS			PRINCIPALS			LECTURERS			PARENTS		
	n = 4			n = 8			n = 2			n = 4		
	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?
R.R.A	4	0	0	6	0	0/1/1	2	0	0	3	0	0/0/1
V.R.A	4	0	0	6	0	0/1/1	2	0	0	3	0	0/0/1
S. P	4	0	0	6	1	0/1/0	2	0	0	3	0	0/0/1
S.E	4	0	0	7	0	0/1/0	2	0	0	4	0	0
T-p C	4	0	0	6	0	0/1/1	2	0	0	4	0	0
P.C	4	0	0	6	0	0/1/1	2	0	0	4	0	0
S.W.&R	4	0	0	7	0	0/1/0	2	0	0	4	0	0
A.C	2	1	0/0/1	3	1	0/3/1	2	0	0	4	0	0
R.W.W	3	0	0/1/0	5	1	0/1/1	2	0	0	3	0	0/0/1
R.T	2	1	0/0/1	4	1	0/2/1	2	0	0	3	0	0/0/1
S.S.R	4	0	0	7	0	0/1/0	2	0	0	4	0	0
S.S.W	4	0	0	7	0	0/1/0	2	0	0	4	0	0
B.I	3	0	0/1/0	5	0	1/2/0	2	0	0	4	0	0
C. E. T. P	4	0	0	5	1	0/2/0	2	0	0	4	0	0

Table 17

Responses to Assessment Opportunities by Group for the 9 - 11 Age Group

AS'T OPP'S	TEACHERS			PRINCIPALS			LECTURERS			PARENTS		
	n = 4			n = 8			n = 2			n = 4		
	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?	R	M	E/NR/?
T. O	4	0	0	7	0	0/1/0	1	1	0	4	0	0
W. P	4	0	0	6	0	0/1/1	2	0	0	3	0	0/0/1
L. F	3	1	0	6	0	0/1/1	2	0	0	4	0	0
T-p C	4	0	0	6	0	0/1/1	2	0	0	3	0	0/0/1
W. S	4	0	0	7	0	0/1/0	2	0	0	4	0	0
A. R	4	0	0	6	0	0/1/1	2	0	0	3	0	0/0/1
P. C	4	0	0	6	0	0/1/1	2	0	0	3	0	0/0/1
H. S	3	0	0/1/0	5	0	0/2/1	2	0	0	1	0	0/0/3

I believe that if students are taught using a process approach as proposed, they would need to have experience in responding to test items that are product-oriented. The time devoted in the final year would, as one parent stated, prepares students for working under examination conditions and promote confidence in taking the test. It would also address another parent's concern about the nature of the test items for the transfer examination. The idea of preparing students for tests by engaging them in test activity is promoted by Wheeler and Haertel (1993). These researchers stress that this procedure is independent of knowledge and skills being tested. Instead, the mechanics of the test is the focus. The aim of this procedure is to make the student "test wise." They also emphasize that it is not a quick fix for "poor instruction" and "insufficient learning" but it can assist students in learning, in interpersonal relationships, work activities and life encounters.

The use of rubrics was noted as a good idea by one practitioner. It was an unfamiliar term for parents. Rubrics is also a new concept for language arts instruction. Recall that assessment is not discussed in the current language arts syllabus. It is possible that some parents were unfamiliar with more terms than indicated and opted to retain them in the faith that they would benefit children. This suspicion is based on the tradition that the school is chiefly responsible for the child's education.

Summary of Findings: 9 - 11 Age Group

For the 9 - 11 age group, 4 of the 15 major objectives were retained by all of the groups. Of the remaining 11 objectives all were modified by principals, one was undecided (retain-modify) between lecturers, one was queried by a parent. All other members of groups retained them. Comments for major objectives revealed that groups interpreted them differently. Benefits of the objectives were noted by the stakeholders specifically, the benefits of the functional use of language and language as development of the self. Benefits of the "wider world of literature" was also noted. Interpretation of the language arts document from a skills-based perspective was shown to be limiting for language arts instruction. Other issues raised in the comments for this section were time allocation for language arts instruction and the omission of technology.

Twenty-seven of the 31 experiences/activities were retained by all groups. Four of the 31 experiences/activities were undecided - three retain-modify and one retain-eliminate - between lecturers. Principals gave no response and made queries more often than any other group for this section. The experiences were generally accepted by the stakeholders and the benefits of these were noted. However, it was pointed out that the presence of the Common Entrance examination would take priority over the other activities. Although testing procedures were included for the purpose of concentrating on the examination after the children were given quality instruction, practitioners did not seem to think it was adequate time for preparing students for the examination.

Six of the 8 assessment opportunities were retained by all of the groups. There were no eliminations. 'Teacher Observations' was undecided (retain-modify) between lecturers. Principals made queries and there were non responses instead of modifications for this section. 'Holistic Scoring' was the only assessment opportunity and the only item on the questionnaire, to be queried by a majority of group members - parents. Assessment opportunities were thought to be suitable and beneficial to the students but again the Common Entrance examination was highlighted to have priority for this age group even though it would be to the detriment of student learning.

Supportive Findings from the Employability Skills Profile

This checklist provided information that contributed to two aspects of the study. One aspect is that it directly related to the feasibility of implementing an all-inclusive cooperative model of curriculum development. Most business persons indicated an interest in the study and eagerly participated. A second aspect is that the checklist indirectly garnered insights into perspectives of business persons, in relation to the proposed language arts framework. Since there were certain strategies included in the language arts framework document which promoted work and social skills, responses from business persons were intended to assist in building a case for the retention of these skills, should other stakeholders have opted to eliminate them by majority selection. Therefore, this instrument is indirectly related to the research question - what aspects of the proposed curriculum framework will various stakeholder groups retain, modify or eliminate, given the opportunity?

Based on the premise that business persons are more interested in having access to literate employees than they are in the literacy acquisition process of those employees, the Employability Skills Profile was particularly designed to determine:

- Those skills which provide the basic foundation to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results.
- The combination of skills, attitudes and behaviors required to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results.
- Those skills needed to work with others on a job and achieve the best results.

Table 18, p. 138, summarizes the responses of those business persons who participated in the study. Using a criterion of decision of at least 4 of 8 respondents in agreement, a skill with a value of 4 was interpreted as questionable or indecisive because it would be a 50 : 50 split among business persons. (Refer to Appendix E, p. 235, for a copy of the checklist). Participants were instructed to "Please put an (✕) on the first dotted line next to those skills where you think schools are failing to prepare individuals for the workforce. Then place a tick (✓) on the inner dotted line next to those skills that are important for work." The rationale for including the former was to discover if business persons were satisfied that schools were preparing students with skills that were useful for work. Since the checklist contained skills that were important for work in the Canadian context and skills that were embedded in the language arts framework, it was considered useful to have this information to assist in determining whether including these skills in the proposed language arts framework could be beneficial in the Barbadian context.

Table 18

Responses to the Employability Skills Profile by Business Persons (n = 8)

SKILL	TOT. ✕	TOT. ✓
COMMUNICATION Understand and speak standard English as it is the language in which business is conducted	4	8
Listen in order to understand and learn	3	7

SKILL	TOT. ✗	TOT. ✓
COMMUNICATION CONTD. Read, comprehend and use written materials, including graphs, charts and displays	1	6
Write standard English effectively	4	7
THINKING Think critically and act logically to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions	6	7
Understand and solve problems involving mathematics and use the results in practical situations	5	6
Use technology, instruments, tools and information systems effectively	4	8
Access and apply specialized knowledge from various fields	3	7
LEARNING Continue to learn for life	7	7
POSITIVE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS Demonstrate self-esteem and confidence	3	7
Demonstrate honesty, integrity and personal ethics	5	8
Demonstrate a positive attitude toward learning, growth and personal health	3	7
Demonstrate initiative, energy and persistence to get the job done	4	7
RESPONSIBILITY Demonstrate the ability to plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals	6	8
Demonstrate accountability for actions taken	5	7
ADAPTABILITY Demonstrate a positive attitude toward change	5	7
Demonstrate recognition of and respect for people's diversity and individual differences	6	7
Demonstrate the ability to identify and suggest new ideas to get the job done - creativity	5	7
WORK WITH OTHERS Understand and contribute to the organization's goals	6	8
Understand and work within the culture of the group	3	7
Plan and make decisions with others and support the outcomes	3	7
Respect the thoughts and opinions of the others in the group, and exercise "give and take" to achieve group results	4	7
Seek a team approach as appropriate	4	6

SKILL	TOT. ×	TOT. ✓
WORK WITH OTHERS CONTD. Lead when appropriate, mobilizing the group for high performance	4	7

All eight business persons who participated in the study unanimously agreed, that all 24 skills were important in getting, keeping and progressing in a job. Two business persons made additional comments which identified five skills they considered job specific because, as one stated:

> Much of the above [Communication skills through to Learning skills] is obvious, but it depends on the job and the level of manual and mental skill required - the person's position in the organization and what that person actually does. As you would appreciate, a person could be employable without being technical.

Job-specific skills are therefore considered to be higher level skills and would not normally be required of school leavers. Of these job-specific skills only one marked [**] was not identified as belonging to the group of skills for which students were not being properly taught in school. These job-specific skills were:

> Read, comprehend and use written materials including graphs, charts and displays [**]
>
> Write Standard English effectively
>
> Think critically and act logically to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions
>
> Understand and solve problems involving mathematics and use the results in practical situations
>
> Demonstrate the ability to plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals

It was surprising to discover that these were job-specific skills. It is important to note that these findings are attributed only to 2 of the 8 respondents. Most of the literature on workplace literacy is based on research from the United States, for example Bloome (1987), Foran et al., (1990), Mikulecky (1981, 1984, 1988) and O'Neil (1997). These researchers

agree that what were once more advanced skills have now become entry level skills in the workplace. Foran et al. (1990) describe the SCANS (Secretary's Commission for Achieving Necessary Skills) report as listing a set of competencies in the form of outcomes or performances school leavers should possess on completing secondary education. These competencies include basic literacy and numeracy skills, thinking skills, personal qualities, management of resources, interpersonal, informational, systems and technology skills. Based on the research literature, those skills identified as "job-specific" are considered basic in the North American context. It is possible that within a decade these skills will be considered basic in the Barbadian context.

Business persons were not in agreement when identifying skills that were problematic for school leavers. The non-response rate for this task was high, ranging from 1 through to 7. Nine of the 24 skills were identified as problematic for students on leaving school. These are:

Thinking
- Think critically and act logically to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions
- Understand and solve problems involving mathematics and use the results in practical situations

Learning
- Continue to learn for life

Responsibility
- The ability to plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals
- Accountability for actions taken

Adaptability
- Demonstrate a positive attitude toward change
- Demonstrate recognition of and respect for people's diversity and individual differences
- Demonstrate the ability to identify and suggest new ideas to get the job done - creativity

Work with Others
- Understand and contribute to the organization's goals

Business persons gave the highest priority to "Continue to learn for life," (7 out of 8). "Thinking," "Responsibility" and "Adaptability" also had high scores. Strategies in the proposed language arts framework foster these skills. The promotion and development of classroom as communities of learners also assist in realizing these skills. Providing teachers with these strategies is of utmost import.

Supportive Findings from the Practitioner-Oriented Questionnaire

Eight teachers and nine principals completed this questionnaire and are referred to collectively as practitioners. In Barbados, because there is no teacher substitute system, principals are required to engage in language arts instruction when a teacher is absent. The findings gave some insight into factors which could be identified as inhibiting or facilitating implementation of a proposed literacy-based language arts curriculum. These findings are now presented.

Practitioners in this study listed Instruction over Training as a factor most closely related to children's failure to acquire literacy by the end of elementary school. These participants felt that Instructional/Curricular changes or suggestions were by far more likely to improve students' success than the factors Philosophy, Classroom Setting, Professional Training. Fifteen of the17 practitioners indicated that their training for language arts/reading instruction was adequate. Only two indicated inadequacy. These findings hold the potential to implement instructional change which would require revolutionary professional development, on the condition that practitioners are convinced that the instructional change is a consequence of professional development.

When inadequacies of past training were addressed, reasons were concerned with intensity or extensiveness of scope, focus and emphasis, insufficient opportunities for practice, time management of sessions and the theoretical rather than practical orientation of the training experience as evident in the following statements:

> Training has been too general and specialized to remediate specific problems encountered in classrooms. Not enough opportunities have been provided to allow one to put into practice concepts/skills taught.

> My training did not focus on children with special needs who are in regular classrooms and who have to be taught like other children.

Was not extensive enough.

One area of inadequacy is the insufficient time allotted for practical lessons and demonstrations.

A more in-depth programme was needed. Training did not assist adequately to help meet the varying needs of the pupils. More refresher courses needed.
The inadequacies of training are: the program was more theoretical than practical and information given was on a superficial level.

It had been inadequate only in the sense that more strategic approaches could have been incorporated.

These comments can be useful to teacher educators in planning teacher professional development to accompany the proposed language arts framework.

The current language arts syllabus was rated as adequate in terms of relevance to children's ages, needs, life skills, educational aims, educational objectives, assessment and content. It was thought to be well-planned, well-sequenced and culturally appropriate by both groups of practitioners based on the comments following:

Has been well-planned especially the sequential stages of learning of concepts. Covers a wide range of skills/concepts needed by pupils at each particular age-level.

The syllabus is clearly broken down into the Language Arts areas (Written Expression, Spelling, etc) and then this is further broken down into the topics to be covered (nouns, adjectives, etc).

One of the goals of the primary school is to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for writing the Common Entrance Examination at the end of primary school life. Another one would be hinged on preparing them [children] for secondary school. I think that the syllabus sets out to meet these needs and this is therefore adequate.

It is relevant to particular age groups. It is academically enriching and graded. It is also culture-sound since we use textbooks which are relevant to the Caribbean.

It provides for the development of basic skills in children at the primary school level which are necessary for (1) daily living and (2) the more advanced phase of learning at secondary level if teachers address individual needs.

> Breaks down the syllabus into specific areas. Designed to accommodate the average child.

> Skills are well-defined (Infant & Junior). Infant Department - good layout of Objectives, Skills/Concepts, Activities, Resources/Materials.

For practitioners to have been so favourable in their comments about a proposed language arts framework after indicating that the current language arts syllabus is adequate is encouraging. This finding is considered facilitative towards possible implementation of the proposed language arts framework.

Where the syllabus was inadequate, changes and suggestions were related to breadth of coverage, levels of performance, depth of understanding and balance. It was agreed by a majority that time allocation for language arts is adequate. This question was presented because it was thought to be useful to obtain some insight into the perceptions of practitioners based on the premise that time allocation for language arts might affect the completion of the syllabus. Fifteen of the 17 practitioners agreed that the 13/35 periods per week allotted for language arts instruction were adequate. However, the following comments raised issues that deserve some recognition as they could impact on the success of the proposed language arts framework. These are:

> The time periods are too short. Therefore there is need for the restructuring of timetables to reflect an integrated approach to the teaching of various language arts concepts.

> Time is okay. It is how the teacher uses it. There is always room for incidental teaching.

> I think time is quite reasonable. Sometimes they are many interruptions in the school time table and the time for teaching is used up otherwise.

> There is some scope for flexibility. Teachers are not required to stick slavishly to a timetable.

> It is adequate, since it is taught in all its aspects every week and in its specific components. It is also incorporated as part of the other subject areas.

Each practitioner has defined adequacy of time differently. This is an aspect in which I lack experience. Whether time is adequate will be determined after consultation with a

wider range of practitioners to promote consistency in terms of flexibility in all schools.

Given that the proposed language arts framework was based on total integration of the English language arts, coupled with the fact that I had been away from the teaching context of Barbados, it was thought useful to inquire about practitioners' views on language arts integration. Fourteen of the 17 participants viewed language arts integration as favourable for reasons such as:

> A wider variety of topic areas can be covered in any one lesson.

> The child sees language as a whole as opposed to individual units, transfer of learning thus becomes easier and more natural. This approach gives more scope for the child to be actively involved in the learning process. Integrated Language Arts is an interesting and effective teaching strategy. Many skills are developed and reinforced through cross-subject teaching. In integrated teaching each student can learn and build confidence in self while doing so. This can also help the emotional child.

One person preferred the current language arts syllabus. Two others differed by stating that they favoured a "mixture" or "would marry such a program [an integrated program] with existing programs." The latter two comments suggest that these participants do not have well-informed conceptualizations of what integrated language arts instruction entails. Hence an effort should be made to make the appropriate literature available to practitioners. Since the majority were in favour of language arts integration, this finding was interpreted to be facilitative.

Practitioners were given an opportunity to describe how their "ideal language arts program" would deal with literacy. Samples of their descriptions are as follows:

> I would reduce the ratio of pupils to teacher especially where there are children of lesser ability. Have more [teaching] aids and equipment available. Have a specialist teacher available.

> Children would participate in a variety of activities geared to their interests and experiences so that learning would be an enjoyable activity which appears to be meaningful to children and not to score marks. Children would be provided with opportunities/experiences which will enable them to experience different levels of success. Too many children see themselves as failures in the system.

> My program would be a Whole Language or Integrated Language approach. In this approach only small groups would be working with the teacher at specified times. Pupils would be less inhibited and would feel more relaxed about sharing their opinions. In this approach focus would also be on each individual child where his strengths could be developed and his weakness worked on for improvement. Learning centres would also be set up whereby pupils could be actively involved.

> Reading; doing research; reporting; speech drills; making up news items and presenting them to class.

> An ideal language arts program cannot take place in the classroom setting only. One of the aims of the programme is to enable the child to build on his/her experiences. Therefore, there will be the need for tours [field trips] to places (fish markets, etc.). Use of research, making use of outside information. Oral discussions a priority. Written expression based on the above.

Collectively, these findings showed responses that could be spread along a non-skills-based skills-based continuum. The idea of a continuum came from the work of Christensen (1990) who suggests that teachers change their philosophy and instructional practices from a traditional approach to an integrated approach by a process which varies from teacher to teacher. This finding has implications for professional development and for facilitating instructional change as described in the proposed language arts framework. It could also be perceived as inhibitive or rather restrictive since practitioners would be of varying levels of development as all learners are.

At the start of this study, it was suspected that Barbadian practitioners were not favourable to mandated programs. This suspicion was confirmed by these responses:

> My main concern would be whether slow-learners should be able to master the same number of behaviours as the average and high-flyer student and in the same time.

> ... some aspects beyond pupils' abilities in the primary school.

> Should have an input else you do not develop ownership of the program.

> ... principals and teachers should have input in the formulation of the syllabus.

> If it is developed by a cross-section of teachers from the primary school it should be reasonable.

Practitioners demonstrated legitimate concerns with mandated language arts programs. Participants generally did not favour being overlooked in the curriculum development process and 14 out of 17 expressed a willingness to participate in language arts curriculum development for reasons such as:

> Being familiar with the students' background, I will be better able to design programs which are applicable to their needs - socially, culturally, etc.

> I am interested in any opportunity which would provide learning and sharing of ideas or knowledge that can upgrade the education offered to children in a rapidly developing world. I believe I can make a valuable contribution.

> As practicing educators, coming into contact with students, we are familiar with concepts which give most trouble.

> I will be willing to add new ideas to which I have been exposed.

The others stated that they were unwilling to participate in curriculum development because of the time-consuming nature of the exercise. Young (1987, p. 22) reminds us that "teachers have something unique to offer: their first hand knowledge of what works and what doesn't work in the classroom situation." Given that most teachers in this study seem receptive to a more non-traditional approach to language arts instruction, these findings are viewed as facilitative of implementing a proposed language arts program based on constructivist principles.

Summary of Findings from the Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire

Responses to this questionnaire established that language arts instruction in Barbadian elementary schools is traditionally skills based. Practitioners felt that instruction was the factor most associated with children's literacy difficulty. Instruction was also highlighted as the factor where change would most likely improve students' language development. For these reasons, instruction was viewed as a facilitative factor. Although a majority of participants indicated that their training was adequate they were able to highlight areas of inadequacy which is viewed as potentially facilitative, providing that these issues are addressed in professional development. The adequacy of the current language arts was not

seen as inhibitive, in light of the favourable response of practitioners to the proposed language arts framework. Time allocation was not distinguished as either facilitative or inhibitive. Instead, it was decided that it would be determined cooperatively, with other more experienced practitioners. Participants favoured language arts integration and the opportunity to participate in curriculum development because they have valuable contributions to make. This finding is supported by Young (1987). Given the opportunity, most practitioners described non skills-based language arts programs as their ideal language arts program. This finding was seen as very favourable to the implementation of the proposed language arts framework. A traditional approach was seen as inhibitive because the new approach is different and will require change in attitude and beliefs both of which are very ingrained and difficult to change.

Summary

This chapter continues Phase II of the study and reported the findings of the stakeholders. It responded to the two questions around which the investigation was centred. The first question was, "What is the nature of an elementary English language arts curriculum framework designed for the Barbadian context, and based on current research and theory?" A comparative analysis between the language arts curriculum framework and the current language arts syllabus revealed that the framework had components that were new to the elementary English language arts curriculum. These components were a philosophical statement, multiple major objectives, experiences/activities deliberately arranged to allow for flexibility in planning and continuity of instruction and an assessment section. The document was also organized in age clusters rather than by class or grade level.

The second question was "What is the nature of stakeholder response, to a proposed language arts curriculum framework?" A content analysis of the Language Arts Framework questionnaire revealed both commonalities and differences among teachers, principals, lecturers and parents. A superficial look across group responses tended to suggest that groups behaved similarly by retaining all of the components for each age group. However, a more detailed examination of the comments each group revealed some differences.

Stakeholder groups shared similar views in their perception of the value of the philosophical statement in the language arts framework. They valued its child-centred nature and the implied improvements in the quality of language learning-teaching process and the instructional environment. Groups differed however, on the emphasis placed on these same factors. Where suggestions were made towards improving the philosophical statement, principals and lecturers emphasized the teaching-learning process. Parents focused their attention towards their own group by highlighting the inclusion of parents as recognized stakeholders. Teachers, on the other hand, expressed their desire for all-inclusive and widespread adoption of the "Comprehensive Philosophy for Language Arts" by "school, parent and community."

None of the program goals was eliminated. All goals were retained with the exception of Goals One and Five. The main reason for modifying a goal was its lack of clarity. All groups illustrated choices that were favourable towards retention of the Major Goals in the language arts framework.

For the 3 - 5 age group, there was consensus among all groups in retaining the major objectives. All of 14 experiences/activities were retained except for Informational Reading and Informational Writing which were undecided by both parents and lecturers, and Book Introductions, Dictated Stories and Picture Stories that were undecided by lecturers. Four of the assessment opportunities were undecided by parents. All other groups retained all other assessment opportunities except for an indecision between lecturers for 'Teacher Observations.' Teachers and principals were especially vocal in expressing the advantages of ongoing, informal assessment and appropriate record-keeping.

For the 6 - 8 age group, the trend was similar. There was full retention of the major objectives by teachers, principals and parents. Lecturers were undecided between objectives A, E and K. All of the 14 experiences/activities were retained by all of the groups except four. Lecturers were undecided for those four. All of the 8 assessment opportunities were retained by all of the groups except that lecturers and parents were undecided for Teacher Observations, principals and parents were undecided on Holistic Scoring and one teacher modified it. In this age group principals were identified as the group with the most variation

among options. Holistic Scoring was the only modification for teachers for any age group. Holistic Scoring also had the lowest retention rate of all the items.

The 9 - 11 age group had the widest variation in responses among the age groups and principals were again the group with the most variation in its responses. All of the 15 major objectives were retained by all of the groups but one for which lecturers were undecided. Experiences/activities showed the most variation in agreement across groups. All of the 29 items were retained by all of the groups but the five for which lecturers were undecided. All of the 8 assessment opportunities were retained by all of the groups except for Teacher Observations for which lecturers were undecided.

Thus, the proposed language document, because it was based on current research, possessed new components. Comments were favourable for all of the new components. The language arts document was well-received by teachers, principals, lecturers and parents. Stakeholders were able to identify benefits of having these new components included in the document. Teachers were the only group to link the benefits of the philosophical statement specifically to the world of work but other groups were more general in relating benefits to life's encounters. The skills embedded in the language arts framework were identified by business persons as necessary for work. Benefits of the philosophical statement were expected to be child-centred because of the orientation of the document. Additional benefits were noted for all of the stakeholders. All of the items in all sections of the language arts document were retained by most groups. Lecturers was the only group that made no queries and accumulated no non-response items. This could be attributed to their familiarity with professional literature because of their jobs. None of the components were eliminated by any of the groups. Items that were modified were modified by only one group for any case in point. Modifications were mostly because of lack of clarity or unfamiliarity with the related terminology. The responses of participants to the language arts document revealed inconsistencies within the education community as well as differences within groups. Responses also revealed similarities among groups.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the study, the conclusions of the study, the implications of the major findings, suggestions for further research based on the findings and personal reflections on the study.

Review of the Study

This study explored a new approach to language arts curriculum development in elementary schools in Barbados through consultative curriculum development. The study was guided by two questions:

1. What is the nature of an elementary English language arts curriculum framework designed for the Barbadian context and based on current research and theory?
2. What is the nature of stakeholder response to a proposed language arts curriculum framework?

The study consisted of two phases. Phase I described and documented the development of a proposed language arts curriculum framework for the Barbadian context based on current research on language and literacy development and curriculum theory. The proposed language arts framework was developed by the researcher, who is a native of Barbados and an experienced teacher. This phase was a necessary prerequisite to the stakeholder exploration and took place while studying in a doctoral program at the University of Alberta. Phase II described the investigative aspect of the study: the construction of instruments used in the research exploration, the research procedures, the data collection and the analysis of the data from both phases of the study.

In order to access stakeholder response to the proposed language arts framework and to determine the feasibility of a cooperative curriculum development model, the researcher returned to Barbados. The participants in Phase II of this descriptive inquiry comprised two lecturers, eight teachers and nine principals from nine primary schools, four parents of primary school-aged children and eight business persons in Barbados. Data were collected in the qualitative inquiry over a three-month period. The data were gathered primarily through a

semi-structured questionnaire (for teacher educators, practitioners and parents) referred to in the study as the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire. Other supportive instruments were an open-ended questionnaire (for principals and teachers only) referred to as the Practitioner-oriented Questionnaire, a checklist for business persons referred to as the Employability Skills Profile, and field notes. The current elementary English language arts syllabus for Barbados served as a reference point for the first phase of the study. The resulting data were analyzed by comparing the proposed language arts framework with the current language arts syllabus. Content analyses were conducted on the data from the second phase of the study to identify themes that emerged and to present numeric data for easy interpretation. Numeric descriptions were created for the structured parts of the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire. Three major groups of themes emerged from this research study that contribute to the overall understanding of exploring the feasibility of a constructivist language arts framework for elementary schools in Barbados. These are related to the actual proposed language arts framework, stakeholder response to the proposed language arts framework and stakeholder group response to the proposed language arts framework.

Major Findings

The findings of this study contribute to an understanding of a consultative approach to curriculum development in language arts as specifically constructed for the island of Barbados - a context unlike that described in the research literature. Here is a summary of the findings.

- A language arts curriculum designed for the Barbadian context and based on current research will have six features not present in the current language arts syllabus. These are a philosophical statement, multiple program goals; major objectives and experience/activities deliberately arranged to allow for flexibility in planning and continuity of instruction, assessment opportunities directly related to instruction. All of these former features will be arranged as a spiral curriculum, and organized into age clusters.

- Stakeholder response to the proposed language arts framework varied within and among groups. The response rate for lecturers was 100 %, for parents 80 %, for teachers 55 %, for principals 72 % and for business persons the first attempt was 50 % but the final attempt was 100 %. Generally participants were willing and committed to provide feedback to the proposed language arts framework but accessing the various stakeholder groups was problematic. The nature of response to the framework could be attributed to the use of a questionnaire and the limitations of the instrument. These limitations, coupled with the unintentional inability to follow up responses greatly affected the study.
- Teachers, principals, lecturers and parents - participants who responded to the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire - identified three valued aspects of the philosophical statement of the new approach. These were that the proposed language arts framework is child-centred, projected an improvement in language learning and teaching, and described an improved learning environment. Each group focused on different aspects of the three themes identified as their perceived value of the philosophical statement.
- All of the groups suggested different ways of improving the philosophical statement. These included changes to the teaching-learning process, inclusion of parents in their children's language arts education and collaboration among stakeholders.
- Four of the five Program Goals were retained by the majority of members in each of the groups of teachers, principals, lecturers and parents. Goal One (Students will demonstrate motivation to learn and use Standard English) was the only goal to be modified by both of the lecturers as a group. Reasons for modifying it included, lack of clarity, lack of specificity and lack of socio-cultural terminology in describing the goal. Consequently, the goal will be revised.
- For the 3 -5 age group, all respondents retained all objectives and experiences/activities by majority count. Assessment opportunities where retained by teacher and principals but included indecisions over Teacher Observations by lecturers (because of their subjective nature), and over Writing Portfolio, Literacy Folders,

Teacher-pupil Conferences and Writing Samples by parents because they were thought inappropriate. There were no major objectives, experiences/activities or assessment opportunities eliminated.

- For the 6 - 8 age group, 8 of the 11 major objectives were retained by all of the groups. Three were undecided between lecturers. Ten of the experiences/activities were retained by all groups. Four were undecided between lecturers. Five of the eight assessment opportunities were retained by all of the groups. 'Teacher Observations' and 'Holistic Scoring' were undecided between lecturers and among principals. Teachers modified Holistic Scoring. There were no major objectives, experiences/activities or assessment opportunities eliminated.
- For the 9 - 11 age group, 4 of the 15 major objectives were retained by all of the groups. Of the remaining 11, all were modified by principals whereas all were retained by teachers. Ten were retained by lecturers and parents. Twenty-seven of the 31 experiences/activities were retained by all of the groups. Four were undecided between lecturers whereas they were retained by the other groups. Seven of the 8 assessment opportunities were retained by all groups. There were no major objectives, experiences/activities or assessment opportunities eliminated.
- The main reasons respondents gave for the minor modifications were: inappropriateness for the age group, lack of clarity for the item, lack of specificity of description, and lack of familiarity with the item in question.
- There were no items eliminated by a majority.

Implications from the Findings of the Study

The findings from this exploration held several implications for a new approach to curriculum development for Barbados, as related to language arts curriculum development, the language arts curriculum development framework and possible implementation and teacher professional development. These will be discussed in the following sections.

Implications for Cooperative Curriculum Development

Stakeholder groups that responded to the Language Arts Framework questionnaire demonstrated a tendency to interpret and conceptualize aspects of the language arts

framework differently even though they focused on the same topic or theme. That each stakeholder group could contribute a different perspective to the curriculum development process adds credence to the efficacy of consultative curriculum development in the Barbadian context through the proposed curriculum development model. This model thrives on utilizing the differences among groups as a means for attaining a more holistic curriculum. Since all stakeholder groups have the same goal - successful students and employees - there is cohesion in a model which maximizes the cooperation of all stakeholder groups. The stakeholder groups that participated in this study have shown that the proposed model is feasible in the Barbadian context.

Implications for the Language Arts Framework

The findings of this exploration indicate that teachers, principals, lecturers and parents are favourable to the ideas espoused in the language arts framework in general and the philosophical statement and assessment opportunities of the framework in particular. In addition, the findings have revealed specific aspects of the framework that need revision. Revisions to the language arts framework will include the following:

- The addition of a glossary of all of the terms used in the document so that the intended meaning is clearly established. The glossary will readers of the document in understanding the goals, objectives, strategies and activities. By defining terms such as 'goal, objective and activity' stakeholders will better understand why some suggestions for modification to these components were not accepted.
- The philosophical statement will be amended to reflect the characteristics of emergent literacy, so that beliefs about children's capabilities are presented as given rather than being left open to interpretation.
- The role of phonics as a strategy for word identification and spelling must be added to the proposed framework.
- The view that technology is secondary to the adoption of meaning-constructing strategies for instruction and for learning must also be explained in the proposed framework.

- Goal One will be modified to read "Students will demonstrate a desire to learn and use Standard English in appropriate situations," as was suggested by one participant.
- Activities suggested by participants consistent with constructivist philosophy such as experience charts will be added. "Free Writing" will be included in the list for the 3 - 5 age group as pointed out by one of the lecturers.
- Major objectives for each age group will be categorized with specific objectives which will demonstrate a qualitative differentiation representative of the progressive revisiting characteristic of a spiral curriculum.

Implications for Teacher Professional Development

A related purpose of this study was to be able to highlight implications for the professional development of elementary teachers for language arts teaching. The responses of some practitioners for modifying or eliminating an item in the language arts framework indicated that some were unfamiliar with emergent literacy and language learning from a constructivist perspective. For example, they thought children were incapable of reading and writing informational texts in the 3 - 5 age group and that children in this age group were only to engage in "informal" literacy activities. This thinking has strong implications for teachers learning through professional development (Mayher & Brause, 1985).

Constructivist teachers approach teaching with positive and anticipatory attitudes, mediate and provide scaffolding for children to help them attain the desired performance so that eventually they can independently engage in the behaviours necessary to complete the task successfully. They also are very knowledgeable in the area of language and literacy learning.

In the Barbadian context, according to the findings of this study, there are inconsistencies in the teaching practices of elementary school teachers. It was reported that some schools were engaging students in some of the strategies and activities described in the proposed language arts framework, such as journal writing and using picture books. Should this proposed framework be accepted and implemented, practitioners will be faced with a new way of thinking about language-literacy acquisition as language arts instruction. Language arts instruction will be integrative and holistic, not a set of skills to be mastered sequentially.

The teacher's and the learner's role will change when reading and writing are encouraged from entry to school and the learner is encouraged to gradually take responsibility for his or her learning.

When a teacher facilitates the child's construction of meaning from the child's experiences a partnership develops. This partnership creates a different pattern of power distribution from that in a traditional classroom. Decision-making becomes negotiation and compromise, not commands. As a result the classroom becomes a community of successful learners.

Therefore, teachers will need to be knowledgeable in language learning and literacy acquisition from a constructivist perspective. Professional development will be essential for teachers who need to make a shift in educational philosophy. Professional development should therefore be constructivist in nature (Brooks, 1984). Learning environments should be designed (Berryman, 1991) where practitioners can experience firsthand the same meaning-constructing processes they will come to expect from their language arts students as part of the process of teaching learning strategies (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986). Achieving quality teaching through professional development is desirable (Glatthorn & Fox, 1996) and possible.

The institution solely responsible for the professional development of teachers in Barbados is the teachers' college. It would be ideal to have principals and teachers engage in full-time study so that they have the time to read and reflect on the proposed philosophy. The principals would then return to their schools and plan with the other staff members the institutional changes necessary for successful implementation of the proposed language arts framework. This would include infra-structural changes and resources. The teachers would continue with a practicum to be carried out at their school of origin. The advantage of having the principal and one other teacher on site is that they can provide support for each other when problem-solving for peculiarities at their school. Upon return after their period of study, each pair (one principal and one teacher) would be responsible for initiating professional development with their staff by providing them with current literature, discussion and planning for implementing the framework.

Implications for the Implementation of the Language Arts Framework

Two major categories of themes surfaced from the collective data which could be considered as either potentially inhibiting or, on the other hand, facilitating implementation of the proposed language arts framework. These were Instructional issues and Attitudinal issues. Five issues were perceived as facilitating implementation - magnitude of retained items, positive attitudes towards assessment, willingness to cooperative between practitioners and parents, the need for instructional change, and the need for professional development; pervasiveness of the traditional philosophy was identified as an inhibiting factor.

These factors are not absolute and are not generalizable to primary school teaching in Barbados. They are presented as a means of gaining insight into potential issues so that measures could be anticipated for dealing with these circumstances should they arise.

Facilitative Factors

The proportion of items retained can be interpreted in itself as facilitative. Respondents were generally in favour of the changes portrayed in the language arts framework which according to Oliva (1997) implies desirability for change. When there is a desire for change then resistance to change is not as influential as when there is resistance.

Although participants were not given the option to eliminate the philosophical statement, they were given the opportunity to modify it through comments and suggestions. Judging from the few suggestions for improvement one could infer that the ideas were retained. As well, there were very positive and encouraging comments made in relation to the ideas presented in the philosophical statement. In fact, as a group teachers suggested nation-wide adoption, which seems to suggest that all stakeholder groups could benefit students by adopting the ideas presented.

Also, judging from the number of retained items for the language arts framework, it appears that all of the respondent groups to the Language Arts Framework Questionnaire were in favour of a child-centred approach to language arts curriculum. This finding contributes to some degree of receptivity to the framework, as it is a completely different approach to what participants have been accustomed.

Parents, teachers, principals and lecturers commented on the assessment opportunities in a strongly favourable manner, though one parent was particularly opinionated about the "formality" of Writing Portfolios, Literacy Folders, Teacher-pupil Conferences and Work samples. Teacher Observations and Anecdotal Records were among those acceptable to the other parent for the 3 - 5 age group. Teachers and principals retained all methods of assessment except Holistic Scoring without elimination from any age group. As the practitioner is still the key decision maker in relation to the realized curriculum, it is advantageous that the most influential groups are the ones who are receptive to this new approach for assessment.

Another positive and related factor, is the fact that respondents who modified the assessment items did so by suggesting other informal methods of assessment. This shows consistency in terms of matching instruction with assessment. It is acknowledged that assessment was also the component with the most evidence of unfamiliarity with terms by members of all groups except lecturers. However, this is not perceived as inhibitive, rather more as problematic enough to be discussed. Edwards and Malicky (1996), among others, noted this change in attitude towards informal assessment. This change in attitude could be attributed to the shortcomings of strictly formal ways and reasons for assessing student performance at a time when teachers are more interested in assessment that more directly informs instruction and the learning process (Musthafa, 1996).

One principal in particular was elaborative as evidenced in the comments given and highlighted the benefits of objectives, suggested activities and assessment opportunities. Based on these comments this principal appears to be very familiar with most of the ideas expressed in the document. This situation is seen as positive because it suggests there are other knowledgeable principals in elementary schools. Recruiting such principals as team leaders could assist in the professional development process.

Another factor considered to be strongly facilitative is the observation that, with the exception of lecturers (because they did not indicate a perspective on this issue), these groups are receptive to cooperating with each other in achieving a common goal - success for the child. This idea is explicit in the following statements:-

Teachers: Provision should however, be made for the involvement of the parent since the parent is recognized as the child's first language teacher.

Parental involvement is critical in the total development of the child.

An outreach programme to target those parents who may be illiterate or ignorant to the importance of communication.

Principals: ...highlighting the importance of the school working in closer collaboration with the home and community in order for training in Language Arts to be successful.

Provision should also be made for parent involvement for information sharing, feedback, clarifications and implementation of measures.

Parents: Addition of parents on the list of factors key to "successful delivery of an integrated, comprehensive program."

Parental involvement is reported as having a positive effect on literacy development and has been documented (Ehri, 1982; Hannon 1990b,1995; Hannon & James 1990; The Centre for Educational Research & Innovation, 1997; Walker 1994; Wolfendale 1994). These studies indicate that parent involvement is associated with increased student performance. The extent of parental involvement in previous times in Barbadian schools was related to disciplining children, but the finding that one parent is willing to cooperate with teachers in language instruction holds promise. It is possible that there are more parents who share this view, especially now that parents possess higher levels of formal education than in the past.

As well, the responses of the various stakeholder groups to the framework suggest that a consultative model of language arts curriculum development is feasible in Barbados as a means of changing language arts curriculum development. Each group was able to contribute a different perspective to the language arts framework. However, group effort will be required to fine-tune approaches or formats for non-practitioner groups such as parents and business persons. Parents and business persons have indicated that they are interested

in participating in curriculum development by participating in the study and through their responses.

Yet another facilitative factor arises out of the observation that teachers and principals chose instructional-related factors as a major contributor to children's literacy failure and the chief factor to target for change. Eight teachers responded 14 times and 9 principals responded 14 times as well, naming instructional factors as reasons they thought some children failed to acquire basic literacy skills by the end of their primary education. When these teachers and principals were asked, "What suggestions or changes would you make to help your students become successful before they graduate to secondary school?," they listed instructional changes over three times as frequently as the next factor. Parent factors were listed four times only and child factors three times only. Distinguishing instruction in this way is interpreted as a positive prerequisite for instructional change in language arts and by extension, the implementation of the language arts framework.

When practitioners were directly asked, "How has your professional training been adequate for your language arts/reading instruction?", no more than two principals indicated the need for "training." However, when practitioners responded to the question "How has your professional training been inadequate for your language arts instruction been?", their comments indicated a need for professional development in language arts instruction and more than two practitioners commented. Practitioners stated:

Teacher: Training has been too general and specialized to remediate specific problems encountered in classrooms. Not enough opportunities have been provided to allow one to put into practice concepts/skills taught.

Teacher: My training did not focus on children with special needs who are in regular classrooms and who have to be taught like other children.

Teacher: Was not extensive enough.

Teacher: One area of inadequacy is the insufficient time allotted for practical lessons and demonstrations

Principal: Focused on upper juniors only.

Principal: A more in-depth programme was needed. Training did not assist adequately to help meet the varying needs of the pupils. More refresher courses needed.

Principal: When I examine my training, I can say that it can be inadequate only in the field of modern day approach (the introduction of computers in the teaching /learning process). Need for training to fit this area.

Principal: The inadequacies of training are: the program was more theoretical than practical and information given was on a superficial level.

Principal: It had been inadequate only in the sense that more strategic approaches could have been incorporated.

That practitioners are aware of the need for their own professional development indicates a positive environment for teacher education reform.

Inhibitive Factors

The single, most important factor that has emerged as inhibitive is the predominant behaviourist philosophy that has traditionally pervaded the educational system in Barbados. As a result of its longevity, principles of behaviourism have influenced many generations of parents, educators and decision makers. Changing such ingrained attitudes and beliefs presents a foreboding task and will require much perseverance, persuasion and a long period of time. Although there is evidence of willingness to change instructional methods, the comments that practitioners have made generally and specifically about their choices, still reflect behavioural views. A practitioner's philosophy is what guides decision-making during instruction. If these views don't change implementation could be problematic. Like rays of hope, there are a few practitioners who appear to be adopting a process orientation their instruction.

Another potentially inhibiting factor is related to the finding that some of the comments made by practitioners implied that teachers will teach language arts, though designed from a constructivist perspective and being child-centred, to meet the requirements of the Common Entrance examination. As long as this attitude persists the examination will remain a priority, rather than curriculum that promises life-long benefits for the student.

Therefore, a case should be presented for restructuring the examination so that it is consistent with constructivist philosophy. As long as the examination remains in its current form and teachers are evaluated according to their students' success, teachers are likely to "teach to the test."

Summary

This descriptive study explored a new approach to language arts curriculum development in Barbados with a sample of stakeholder groups that included teachers, principals, lecturers, parents and business persons. These stakeholders were asked to respond directly and indirectly to a self-designed language arts framework.

The findings indicated that the model of curriculum development is feasible and the language arts framework is suitable. Findings also showed that the framework, because it is based on current research literature and theory, has components that are new to language arts curriculum documents in Barbados.

The findings of the study hold implications for various related areas such as, language arts curriculum development, the nature of the language arts framework, teacher professional development, and implementation of the proposed language arts framework.

Conclusions of the Study

In the final analysis, the findings of the study lead to three main conclusions: the proposed consultative curriculum development model is feasible, the language arts framework is suitable for the Barbadian context and, there are many potentially facilitative factors that could be advantageous to implementation of the proposed language arts framework.

Recommendations for Further Research

During data analysis a number of questions surfaced that suggested further exploration in order to gain better understanding of this new approach to language arts curriculum development for Barbados. These are presented below.

1. The revision process for the Language Arts Framework can be the basis for numerous qualitative and quantitative studies including case studies. Studies would be extremely useful for problem-solving and for considering future improvements to the language arts document or to other subject areas.

2. A follow-up inquiry of the revised version of the language arts framework would be useful with a larger and more representative sample.
3. When the final draft of the language arts framework has been prepared it should be piloted in a small school and documented as a descriptive study. This study would then become the guide for large-scale implementation.
4. Since two of the four parents completed the Language Arts Framework and since engaging in this exploration was my first experience in parental inquiry, I approached this group of respondents out of ignorance and treated them as I would teachers. The kind of response obtained, suggests that it is important to explore with parents ways that could make data collection easier for them and ways in which they could participate more fully, such as through conversations or interviews.

   In light of the suspicion that parents may have retained items based on their faith that the items in the proposed framework are beneficial to their children, it would be helpful to learn more about parental responses to further revisions of the language arts framework.
5. Some of the comments practitioners made indicated some knowledge of non-behaviourist approaches and views about language arts instruction. In order to obtain a better sense of the proportion of practitioners who have initiated an apparent shift away from behaviourist philosophy, it would be useful to survey their sources of professional literature, professional organizations of which they are members, and a history of their professional development. This information would assist in providing adequate resources for teachers.
6. Business persons were assigned a passive role in this inquiry. To survey what role business persons would prefer should they engage in cooperative curriculum development would be helpful in implementing the proposed curriculum development model to its full stakeholder potential.

Personal Reflections

Characteristic of thesis writing is the reflective process that occurs both during and after its completion. Feedback and discussion act as catalysts for reflection. The sharing of ideas that occurred during the final oral examination has inspired some changes related to two components of the language arts curriculum framework - "Program Goals" and "Major Objectives." These changes will be made to the revised draft of the language arts curriculum document.

Originally, the language arts framework was referred to as a "program," hence the use of the term "Program Goals." However, it was realized that "Curriculum" was a more appropriate term and "Program Goals" should be referred to as "Curriculum Goals" to achieve consistency and in keeping with the definition of the term "curriculum" stated in Chapter 1.

It was also agreed that the major objectives, as they are stated, do not match their theoretical description. It was decided that the major objectives would be revised to specify the expected performance(s) inherent in the objectives. This task will be completed with the cooperation of practitioners, subject specialists and curriculum developers as part of the revision process in Barbados.

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APPENDIX A

REVISED SYLLABUSES

FOR

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

CLASS 2

Prepared and Reprinted

by

Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs & Culture,

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The 9 - 10 Programme

I. **Oral Expression**

A. Speech Skills

1. Communicates orally his thoughts and feelings with greater fluency and confidence than in the previous year.
2. Speaks to a class group without mannerisms and maintains good posture.
3. Speaks in a natural, easy manner.
4. Organizes his subject matter.
5. Speaks with adequate loudness.
6. Uses appropriate intonation.
7. Speaks with good voice quality.
8. Speaks at an acceptable rate.
9. Speaks clearly and distinctly.
10. Pronounces correctly.
11. Uses good rhythm.
12. Uses adequate and precise vocabulary.
13. Uses correct English.

B. Listening Skills

1. Attentive Listening
   a. Listens to directions, details, announcements, introductions.
   b. Listens to understand sequence, get central idea, draw inferences, grasp the organization.
2. Responsive Listening

   Listens to join in conversation and in planning and discussing.
3. Appreciative and Creative Listening

   Listens to enjoy the content and to respond to the mood of poems, choral readings, dramatization, literary extracts.

4. Critical Listening

Listens to make judgments and to discriminate between fact and opinion.

C. Poetry

The primary aim of the poetry programme should be enjoyment. At this stage, pupils should begin to show their appreciation by collecting poems and stating personal anthologies. The pupils should still be exposed to similar kinds of poems as in the previous year. The lively rhythms and distinct rhyme should still be present, but pupils should also be exposed to free verse. The programme should be varied and should include humorous as well as narrative poems. Poems about persons, birds, animals, and everyday experiences will still be appealing and will be the means whereby pupils take a look at the world around them described with new clarity and precision. The teacher can make his own selections so long as they are appropriate and good balance is maintained.

D. Reading

1. Word Attack Skills

a. Using verbal context clues:

(i) definition

(ii) child's experience

(iii) contrast

(iv) synonym

(v) familiar language expression.

b. Using structural analysis (word structure):

(i) Reviewing plural, verb, adjective, and adverb endings.

(ii) Prefixes: con-, dis-, ex-, im-, in-, re-, trans-, un-.

(iii) Roots.

(iv) Suffixes: -able, -er, -est, -ful, -ish, -ist, -ly, -ment, -ness, -or, -tion, -ward, -y.

(v) Compounds and hyphenated words.

(vi) Contractions and possessives.

(vii) Syllabic division by rules:

a. Compound word: shoe-maker.

b. Double consonant: but-ter.

c. Single consonant after first vowel: lady.

d. Prefix: un-kind.

e. Suffix: likely.

f. Vowel followed by two consonants or consonant digraph: car -bon; an-chor.

c. Using a junior dictionary.

d. Using phonic analysis (letter sound):

i) Reviewing consonant blends and digraphs, silent consonants, variant sounds of consonants

ii) Principles governing vowel sounds.

iii) Reviewing vowel sounds, vowel digraphs, diphthongs.

iv) Vowel sounds in open and closed syllabuses: e.g. go (open syllable); bat (closed syllable).

(v) Relating of vowel sound to accent.

(vi) Using a pronunciation key.

2. <u>Oral Reading Skills</u>

a. Understanding the purpose for the oral reading lesson.

b. Decoding words accurately.

c. Using correct pronunciation.

d. Using good volume, pitch and clear enunciation.

e. Using good phrasing and expression.

f. Using good eye movement.

g. Using good eye/voice span.

h. Using good breath control.

i. Developing voice projection and control.

3. Silent Reading Skills

   a. Decoding words accurately.

   b. Using good eye movement.

   c. Using good eye span.

   d. Using good rhythm.

   e. Co-ordinating reading rate and comprehension.

4. Comprehension Skills

   a. Understanding vocabulary (literal and figurative).

   b. Following directions and instructions.

   c. Grasping a sequence of events, facts, ideas.

   d. Understanding relationships between:

      i) Cause and effect

      ii) Supporting and main ideas

   e. Selecting main ideas.

   f. Predicting and anticipating outcomes.

   g. Drawing inferences and conclusions.

   h. Comparing and contrasting.

   i. Identifying character traits.

   j. Determining mood, feeling or tone of a passage.

   k. Distinguishing truth from fiction.

   l. Evaluating:

      i) Stating emotional reactions experienced.

      ii) Identifying likes and dislikes with reasons.

      iii) Judging the goodness or badness of a character of a story.

      iv) Judging if an argument or opinion is well supported.

5. Functional Reading Skills

   a. Using alphabet sequence (1st, 2nd, and 3rd letters).

   b. Using a table of contents, an index.

c. Using pictures, globes and maps, graphs, tables, charts as sources of information.

d. Using a dictionary to check spelling, pronunciation, use and meaning of a word.

e. Using a children's encyclopedia.

f. Skimming.

g. Understanding specialised vocabularies.

h. Applying comprehension skills in Section 4 in other subject areas.

i. Developing specialised reading skills needed by special subject matter e.g. reading a mathematical problem, interpreting a map.

6. Recreational Reading

Activities here should continue the development of reading interests, and attempts should be made to improve and refine these interests. The author's hat and/or chair should be used to allow students to read some of their own material to the class.

II **Written Expression**

A. Composition

1. Narration: expanding a story outline, completing an unfinished story, writing experience stories.
2. Creative writing: (prose and poetry) Pourquoi (why) stories about local topics should be encouraged.
3. Description: lost and found articles, persons, places of interest and things.
4. Explanation: instructions or directions on how to make or do things; rules or standards for oral reading, class behaviour or good composition writing: definitions.
5. Letter-writing:
    a. Invitation and reply (acceptance and refusal).
    b. Apology, regret, excuse for absence.

c. Postcards (birthday and Xmas).

d. Friendly letters.

6. Dialogues and interviews.

7. Writing reports: book reports, recording information on a topic for a class project.

B. Organizational Skills

1. Classifying.

2. Focusing on a topic and selecting relevant facts and ideas.

3. Arranging facts, events, ideas, in correct time order.

4. Forming the topic of main idea sentence.

5. Restricting the paragraph to a single idea.

C. Vocabulary Building Skills

1. Building new concepts and refining old ones.

2. Using verbal context clues to get meaning of unfamiliar words. (See Section B under Word Attack Skills).

3. Learning meanings of words and distinguishing meanings of a particular word in different contexts.

4. Discovering meaning by analysing word structure: prefix, root, suffix.

5. Derivatives (words formed from other words).

6. Using one word for many words. E.g. a man who flies an aeroplane: a pilot.

7. Using synonyms, antonyms and homonyms.

8. Classifying words by general category:

a. Analogies

b. Similes

c. Metaphors

9. Learning specialised vocabularies of other subject areas.

10. Using a dictionary to check meaning, use and function.

D. Writing Skills

1. Using correct cursive forms:
    a. Writing neatly and legibly, using correct size, spacing and slant.
    b. Heading all paper in a prescribed and proper manner.
    c. Using margins.
    d. Using the correct form in letters.
    e. Indenting and paragraphing.
2. Using capitals correctly:
    a. First word in a sentence, line of poetry, titles of books, stories, poems.
    b. Titles of persons: His Excellency, Sir William, etc.
    c. Proper names: persons, countries, places, common holidays, organizations.
3. Using punctuation correctly:
    a. Full stop and question mark in statements and questions respectively.
    b. Full stop in abbreviations.
    c. Comma in date, after greeting or closing of a letter, after words in a series.
    d. Apostrophe in contractions and possessives.
    e. Quotation marks in direct speech.
    f. Exclamation mark.
    g. Hyphen in compound words and in breaking a word at the end of a line.
4. Using correct spelling.

E. Spelling

Spelling should be an important part of the reading and writing activities. Pupils should be taught dictionary skills to assist them in checking their

spelling. The programme should consist of the following:

1. Reviewing 'ie' and 'ei' words.
2. Reviewing words that double the last consonant before an ending.
3. Words with double consonants: address, occur.
4. Words with suffixes: -able, -ible, -ness, -ous, -ful, -tion, etc.
5. Words with prefixes con-, dis-, ex-, im-, un-, in-, trans-, etc.
6. Homophones: practise, practice.
7. Words commonly mis-spelt and confused: thought taught, lose, loose, etc.
8. Key words in other subject areas.
9. Irregular words that cause difficulty.

F. Grammar Skills

1. Using the following basic sentence types correctly:
   a. The birds sings.
   b. We love cakes.
   c. The grass is green.
   d. I gave him a book; or I gave a book to him.
   e. He painted the house green.
2. Using negative, interrogative, imperative and passive forms of sentence types in Section F1.
3. Using adjective and adverb modifiers (single words and phrases) to expand sentence types in Section F1.
4. Using joining words:
   a. And, but, either ... or, neither ... nor.
   b. Who, whom, which, that, when, before, after, because.
5. Using plural and possessive forms of nouns correctly.
6. Using possessive pronouns and subject and object forms of personal pronouns correctly.
7. Using comparative and superlative adjective forms correctly.

8. Using positive, comparative and superlative adverb forms correctly.
9. Using the following correctly.
    a. Verbs in the Simple Present, Simple Future, Simple Past, Present and Past Continuous Tenses.
    b. Passive forms of verb in tenses in Section 9a above.
10. Discriminating between dialect and standard usage according to place and circumstance.

APPENDIX B

A

PROPOSED

ENGLISH

LANGUAGE ARTS

CURRICULUM

FRAMEWORK

(Ages 3 - 11)

1998

DO NOT PHOTOCOPY THIS DRAFT

CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Important Characteristics of Language	3
Language Learning	4
Organization of the Language Arts Curriculum Framework	4
Comprehensive Philosophy for Language Arts	7
Program Goals	8
Program for Age Group 3 - 5 Years	11
Program for Age Group 6 - 8 Years	12
Program for Age Group 9 - 11 Years	14
References	16

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, the school was perceived as the sole agent of language instruction. Over the years, this perception has changed to recognize the role of the parent as the child's first language teacher. Building on this language foundation provided by the parents, it is therefore the task of the school to assist children in using and developing their language to their full potential.

English language arts teachers have grown to accept and respect the language which children bring to school and they endeavour to assist these children in acquiring the conventions of standard English. Standard English, is the second language of most Barbadian children, so that when children come to school, they bring with them a wealth of knowledge of language and its uses. This curriculum framework acknowledges these facts and attempts at all times to link the language learning in the formal setting with what children already know and can do at all levels of schooling but especially in the early years of schooling.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF LANGUAGE

The following are concise statements about language which are relevant to language arts instruction intended by this framework. This research is presented as a series of concise statements which are relevant to language arts instruction as intended by this framework.

* Language is the basis of all communication.

* Language is a structured system. It comprises sounds arranged in patterns which form words and sentences to communicate ideas.

* Language is symbolic. It consists of sounds which represent ideas and objects and can be written or oral.

* Language is arbitrary. There is agreement among language users pertaining to what symbols represent and the manner in which these symbols are used.

* Language is a human characteristic. Only humans acquire and use language to express abstract thought.

* Language is a social phenomenon. Language was created and maintained for social purposes.

* Language is culturally transmitted. It has been passed on from one generation to the next and plays a crucial role in people's culture.

* Language is primarily oral. Spoken language is acquired before written language which represents it.

* Language has variations called dialects. People use a variety of ways and styles in speaking, which are determined by geographical location and social factors.

LANGUAGE LEARNING

* Language learning is an active process that commences at birth and continues throughout life.

* Language learning occurs in formal and informal contexts.

* Language learning is the shared responsibility of the student, parents, teachers and the community.

ORGANIZATION OF LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Fundamental principles related to language, language learning, language use and children's development have provided the theoretical framework for the language arts curriculum. The framework is deliberately organized with a philosophical statement preceding the program goals followed by major objectives, language learning experiences and assessment opportunities.

The theoretical principles are made explicit in the "Comprehensive Philosophy for Language Arts." This statement is basic to understanding the organization of the curriculum document. The philosophical statement is an elaboration of the general goals which serve as reminders for teachers when planning for instruction.

> *The teacher is not in the school to impose certain ideas or to form certain habits in the child, but is there as a member of the community to select the influences which shall affect the child and assist him in properly responding to these influences.*
>
> John Dewey

This framework is organized with the intention that teachers exercise flexibility in selecting "influences" which do not jeopardize their accountability to parents or to administrators.

Six general program goals assist in forming the basis of the foundation for this framework. These are broad ideas in identifying the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students are expected to demonstrate with increasing competence and confidence during formal elementary language arts instruction. The goals are to be conceptualized as belonging to the entire school curriculum with each contributing to every language arts experience planned for each child. These goals are superordinate to the major objectives. The major objectives assist the language arts teacher in translating the ideas expressed in the philosophical statement for instruction. These objectives can be made more specific if the teacher so desires. See Figure 1 of this document.

The language learning experiences or activities should therefore reinforce the cumulative and developmental nature of language arts learning for each individual in the formal setting. Language learning experiences or activities are extensive, and one experience or activity can span several objectives. These listed in the document are merely suggestions. The possibilities consistent with the philosophy expressed in this document are numerous. The idea is that the teacher can achieve several objectives during one activity or experience.

Assessment is an on-going process when using this framework. It is based on multi-sampling of student products from which to make inferences about the processes the students are employing. The chief purposes of an assessment opportunity is to give the student constructive feedback and to indicate student growth. Assessment viewed in this way, takes into account the importance of both the learning experience and the product of that learning experience.

The following table shows the structural organization and the relationship among components of the language arts document. Within each age group program goals, major objectives, suggested learning activities and assessment opportunities are matched with each other. With successive age groups, the components of each sub-section revisits those of the previous age group and builds upon them in a cumulative and expansive manner, reflecting the nature of language learning.

PROGRAM GOALS	
Students will: * demonstrate motivation to learn and use standard English. * demonstrate mastery of cumulative skills common to standard English. * show respect for language variations. * acquire language in social situations. * engage in language as artistic expression. * use language to acquire knowledge and information.	
Age Group	
MAJOR OBJECTIVES	**SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ACTIVITIES**
A. Participate daily in print awareness processes.	- Read alongs
ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES	

Figure 1. The structural organization of the language arts framework is depicted.

COMPREHENSIVE PHILOSOPHY FOR LANGUAGE ARTS

It is the mission of all language arts teachers to prepare all children to become life-long thinkers and learners. As language arts teachers, we believe language learning is a natural, active, social, and flexible process. Language learning is on-going and positive, providing skills and strategies necessary to become life-long learners and effective, contributing members of society.

Language learning, the main goal of the English language arts, is a communication process encompassing the tools of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and thinking as they support and enhance each other. It is a natural, meaningful, purposeful process and must be experienced. One learns language by using language; one learns to write by writing, one learns to read by reading. Language learning, being a natural process, is dynamic, allowing for a variety of educational approaches and purposeful strategies that are contextual and experiential and should be incorporated across the curriculum. Being meaningful and purposeful, language learning involves the synthesis and application of new ideas and concepts gleaned from a rich selection of literature, other media and personal experience.

As a natural process, built upon previous experience and knowledge, effective language skills enable children to assimilate new information and communicate new ideas with others. Language arts teachers recognize the value and diversity of children's life experiences and prior knowledge and seek to integrate those experiences into the learning environment. Language arts teachers also recognize the important role of parenting in the early development of language and learning. Therefore, parents are seen as an integral part of their children's basic education. It is through parental modelling that children first develop language skills and attitudes throughout their lives.

Consequently, language arts teachers believe language learning is a continuing cooperative effort between home, school, and community. Children have a natural curiosity and eagerness to learn. They explore their world, and share their learning with each other and significant others.

The school environment should be rich in literature, language and communication where discussion with teachers and peers is an expected part of the learning process and where discussion is a two-way exchange of ideas. Classrooms and staff must provide children with equality of opportunity to share their learning experiences with one another and with their community.

Language learning is child-centred and based upon the belief that all children must experience success. Successful children build upon a solid foundation of positive self-regard and worth. Further, children become competent, confident readers, writers and thinkers, when they work in a secure environment. The language arts program must, therefore, promote the development of children's positive self-image allowing for freedom to make choices, take risks, make mistakes, and take ownership of their own learning in a supportive setting.

Successful delivery of an integrated, comprehensive language arts program requires cooperation and coordination between university, teacher educators, school administrators and teaching staff. To be effective, teachers must receive adequate resources as well as timely and appropriate in-servicing to update, refine, or develop new teaching skills. Teachers must also have the freedom to make choices from a variety of effective teaching strategies and be provided with opportunities for in-school sharing of ideas. To facilitate provision of an integrated language arts curriculum framework, teacher-support networks are encouraged to develop collegial support and generate the free flow of ideas.

Assessment is a natural, non-threatening, and important part of the educational process. It serves as an effective method of communicating children's progress and performance to parents and community. Assessment in language arts is an on-going process and provides a means for determining the individual needs of children.

Moreover, language arts assessment should be viewed as a tool for improving students' language learning. It should be strategy-oriented and innovative, focusing upon the processes more so than the products of learning. Furthermore, language arts assessment should be both formal and informal and should emphasize careful observation of student growth. Language arts assessment should also reflect the instructional goals of the nation and be driven by the outcomes in the language arts curriculum framework.

To be successful in life and contribute to society, children must be connected to each other and their community. This language arts framework serves to actively connect children with new knowledge, each other and the community. Through the integration of meaningful reading, writing, speaking, and listening experiences, students' learning is connected to their world and they become life-long thinkers and learners.

PROGRAM GOALS

Language is a social behaviour. The child's first language was developed in the company of significant persons in his or her life. Language is cumulative and developmental. As the child grows previous language experiences form the basis for expansion and deeper understanding by newer language experiences. This language arts framework is a guide for providing opportunities for children and students to experience language arts in an environment which promotes and develops functional, artistic and enjoyable language learning. These ideas are borne out in the following goals.

GOAL ONE

Students will demonstrate motivation to learn and use standard English.

To realize their potential to learn and use standard English, students must be highly motivated.

Therefore:

Barbadian elementary English language arts students will develop strong motivation by understanding and striving to attain high expectations of students, parents and teachers by developing positive feelings of self-worth which contribute to responsible behaviour, personal and academic growth.

GOAL TWO

Students will demonstrate mastery of cumulative skills common to standard English.

Proficiency in language arts skills are essential for acquiring knowledge and for success in life.

Therefore:

Barbadian elementary language arts students will, to their full potential learn to communicate effectively in speech, listening, writing, and reading with understanding: acquire knowledge of and ability in Language Arts and decision-making.

GOAL THREE

Students will show respect for language variations.

A variety of styles or ways of speaking are observable in and among speakers. These differences are determined by regional and social influences.

Therefore:

Barbadian elementary English language arts teachers will recognize, appreciate and respect the language differences in their students. Students will be encouraged on entering school to think in their own dialect while gradually emphasizing quality and flexibility in the use of language, whether Bajan or standard English.

GOAL FOUR

Students will acquire language in social situations.

Language is culturally transmitted and is created and maintained through social behaviour. It is a purposeful activity.

Therefore:

Barbadian elementary language arts students will be actively involved in authentic language situations. This will be effected through promoting an atmosphere of community, collaboration and risk-taking in the classroom.

GOAL FIVE

Students will engage in language as artistic expression.

Language is used to stir imagination, deepen understanding, arouse emotion and give pleasure through various forms of artistic expression.

Therefore:

Barbadian elementary English language arts students will have many opportunities to experience and respond to literature and other artistic media.

GOAL SIX

Students will use language to acquire information and knowledge.

Language is used to increase understanding of interests, phenomenon, self and others. It is used for inquiry and for problem-solving.

Therefore:

Barbadian elementary English language arts students will use language to gather, organize and present information in a comprehensive manner, on topics of interest to them.

PROGRAM GOALS

Students will:

* Demonstrate motivation to learn and use standard English.
* Demonstrate mastery of cumulative skills common to standard English.
* Show respect for language variations.
* Acquire language in social situations.
* Engage in language as artistic expression.
* Use language to acquire knowledge and information.

3 - 5 Years

MAJOR OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ ACTIVITIES
A. Participate daily in print awareness processes.	- Book introductions (teacher initiated) - Dictated stories - Read alongs
B. Participate in representation processes, for example dramatization.	- Dictated stories - Picture stories - Storytelling
C. Engage daily in concept building processes.	- Reciting rhymes/poems - Show and tell - Role playing/dramatizing - Informational reading
D. Participate daily in reading and writing processes.	- Informational writing - Informational reading - Read alongs
E. Use language processes to build community.	- Role playing/dramatizing
F. Read, write, speak, and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences.	- Following directions - Giving directions
G. Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences.	- Field trips - Open-ended discussions - Observations

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

* Teacher observations
* Writing portfolios
* Literacy folders
* Work samples
* Anecdotal records

PROGRAM GOALS	
Students will: * Demonstrate motivation to learn and use standard English. * Demonstrate mastery of cumulative skills common to standard English. * Show respect for language variations. * Acquire language in social situations. * Engage in language as artistic expression. * Use language to acquire knowledge and information.	
6 - 8 Years	
MAJOR OBJECTIVES	**SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ ACTIVITIES**
A. Participate daily in print awareness processes.	- Book introductions (teacher initiated) - Dictated stories - Read alongs
B. Participate in representation processes, for example dramatization.	- Dictated stories - Picture stories - Storytelling
C. Engage daily in concept building processes.	- Reciting rhymes/poems - Show and tell - Role playing/dramatizing - Informational reading
D. Participate daily in reading and writing processes.	- Informational writing - Informational reading - Read alongs
E. Use language processes to build community.	- Role playing/dramatizing
F. Read, write, speak, and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences.	- Following directions - Giving directions
G. Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences.	- Field trips - Open-ended discussions - Observations
H. Relate one literary work to another.	- Patterned stories - Literature-based, in-depth discussions - Journal writing - Reading/writing workshops - Graphic representations - Book selection procedures

I. Use language processes to discover and explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.	- Field trips - Creating poems/stories - Informational reading - Journal writing - Teacher-pupil conferences
J. Use language processes to comprehend and respond personally and critically to literary and media texts.	- Storytelling - Literature-based, in-depth discussions - Author's circle
K. Use language processes to manage ideas and information.	- Graphic representations - Informational reading - Presentations - Self-evaluation procedures

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

* Teacher observations
* Writing portfolios
* Literacy folders
* Teacher-pupil conferences
* Work samples
* Anecdotal records
* Holistic scoring of language products with rubrics
* Peer conferences

PROGRAM GOALS	
Students will: * Demonstrate motivation to learn and use standard English. * Demonstrate mastery of cumulative skills common to standard English. * Show respect for language variations. * Acquire language in social situations. * Engage in language as artistic expression. * Use language to acquire knowledge and information.	
9 - 11 Years	
MAJOR OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ ACTIVITIES
A. Participate daily in print awareness processes.	- Book introductions (teacher initiated) - Dictated stories - Read alongs
B. Participate in representation processes, for example dramatization.	- Dictated stories - Picture stories - Storytelling
C. Engage daily in concept building processes.	- Reciting rhymes/poems - Show and tell - Role playing/dramatizing - Informational reading
D. Participate daily in reading and writing processes.	- Informational writing - Informational reading - Read alongs
E. Use language processes to build community.	- Role playing/dramatizing
F. Read, write, speak, and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences.	- Following directions - Giving directions
G. Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences.	- Field trips - Open-ended discussions - Observations
H. Relate one literary work to another.	- Patterned stories - Literature-based, in-depth discussions - Journal writing - Reading/writing workshops - Graphic representations - Book selection procedures

I. Use language processes to discover and explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.	- Field trips - Creating poems/stories - Informational reading - Journal writing - Teacher-pupil conferences
J. Use language processes to comprehend and respond personally and critically to literary and media texts.	- Storytelling - Literature-based, in-depth discussions - Author's circle
K. Use language processes to manage ideas and information.	- Graphic representations - Informational reading - Informational writing - Presentations - Self-evaluation procedures
L. Use language processes to enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.	- Student publications - Peer conferences - Journal writing - Graphic representations
M. Use rubrics to evaluate their language arts strategies and products for self-improvement.	- Student publications - Reading/writing workshops - Peer conferences - Self-evaluation procedures
N. Use language processes to choose and research a topic, both individually and as a team member.	- Projects - Novel studies - Presentations - Informational writing
O. Participate in test-taking procedures.	- Collaborative evaluations - Common entrance testing procedures

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

* Teacher observations
* Writing portfolios
* Literacy folders
* Teacher-pupil conferences
* Work samples
* Anecdotal records
* Holistic scoring of language products with rubrics
* Peer conferences
* Sample common entrance examinations

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APPENDIX C

Language Arts Framework Questionnaire

Your participation in this research project is greatly appreciated.

In order to appropriately complete this questionnaire, you will be required to study and reflect on each section of the Curriculum Framework, then follow the instructions for the particular section.

At certain points throughout this instrument, you will be required to decide whether to retain, modify or eliminate an item by circling one letter from the following options:

R - retain as is M -modify as follows E - eliminate

In the lined spaces following you option, state your reason(s) for you choice. If you should decide to modify an item, please include the modification with your reason(s).

Please respond to as many age groups as you can.

Should you have any problems, please contact me at 436-1552, on any day between 9:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.

Thank you for your valued participation.

PLEASE PLACE A TICK [✓] IN THE BRACKETS OF THE GROUP YOU REPRESENT.

[ ] N.C.P.T.A.	[ ] Teacher
[ ] Principal	[ ] Teachers' College Lecturer
[ ] Ministry Official	[ ] University Lecturer

Study the "Comprehensive Philosophy for Language Arts" and respond to the requests below.

A] What do you perceive as the potential value of this philosophy?

B] Suggest ways in which this philosophical statement can be improved upon.

Please indicate by circling the representative letter, which Program Goals should be R- Retained, M - Modified or E - Eliminated. State your reason(s) in each case and give your suggestions in the space provided below.

PROGRAM GOALS

GOAL ONE

Students will demonstrate motivation to learn to use standard English.

R M E

GOAL TWO

Students will demonstrate mastery of cumulative skills common to standard English.

R M E

GOAL THREE

Students will show respect for language variation. R M E

GOAL FOUR

Students will acquire language in social situations. R M E

GOAL FIVE

Students will engage in language as artistic expression. R M E

Circle the appropriate letter indicating your choice and give your reason(s) in the spaces provided below.

R - Retain **M - Modify** **E - Eliminate**

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

3 - 5 Years

A. Participate in print awareness processes. R M E

B. Listen to and dramatize stories and nursery rhymes R M E

C. Engage daily in concept building processes. R M E

D. Participate daily in reading and writing processes. R M E

E. Use language processes to build community. R M E

F. Read, write, speak and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences. R M E

G. Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences.

H. R M E

SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ACTIVITIES

3 - 5 Years

Book introductions (teacher initiated)	R M E	Read alongs	R M E
Dictated stories	R M E	Picture stories	R M E
Reciting Poems	R M E	Open-ended discussions	R M E
Show and tell	R M E	Storytelling	R M E
Role playing/Dramatizing	R M E	Observations	R M E

Informational reading	R M E	Informational writing	R M E
Following directions	R M E	Giving directions	R M E

Comment critically on the learning experiences/activities for the 3 - 5 age group. Feel free to make suggestions.

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Circle the appropriate letter indicating your choice.

R - Retain **M - Modify** **E - Eliminate**

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

3 - 5 Years

Teacher observations	R M E	Writing portfolios	R M E
Literacy folders	R M E	Teacher-pupil conferences	R M E
Work samples	R M E	Anecdotal records	R M E

Comment critically on the assessment opportunities for the 3 - 5 age group. Feel free to make suggestions.

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Circle the appropriate letter indicating your choice and give your reason(s) in the spaces provided below.

R - Retain **M - Modify** **E - Eliminate**

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

6 - 8 Years

A.	Participate in print awareness processes.	R	M	E
B.	Listen to and dramatize stories and nursery rhymes	R	M	E
C.	Engage daily in concept building processes.	R	M	E
D.	Participate daily in reading and writing processes.	R	M	E
E.	Use language processes to build community.	R	M	E

F. Read, write, speak and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences. R M E

G. Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences. R M E

H. Relate one literary work to another. R M E

I. Use language processes to discover and explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences. R M E

J. Use language processes to comprehend and respond personally and critically to literary and media texts. R M E

K. Use language processes to manage ideas and information. R M E

Circle the appropriate letter indicating your choice.

SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ACTIVITIES

6 - 8 Years

Book introductions (teacher initiated)	R M E	Read alongs	R M E
Dictated stories	R M E	Picture stories	R M E
Reciting Poems	R M E	Open-ended discussions	R M E

Show and tell	R M E	Storytelling	R M E
Role playing/Dramatizing	R M E	Observations	R M E
Informational reading	R M E	Informational writing	R M E
Following directions	R M E	Giving directions	R M E

Comment critically on the learning experiences/activities for the 6 - 8 age group. Feel free to make suggestions.

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Circle the appropriate letter indicating your choice.

R - Retain **M - Modify** **E - Eliminate**

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

6 - 8 Years

Teacher observations	R M E	Writing portfolios	R M E
Literacy folders	R M E	Teacher-pupil conferences	R M E
Work samples	R M E	Anecdotal records	R M E
Peer conferences	R M E		

Holistic scoring of language products with rubrics R M E

Comment critically on the assessment opportunities for the 6 - 8 age group. Feel free to make suggestions.

_____

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Circle the appropriate letter indicating your choice and give your reason(s) in the spaces provided below.

R - Retain **M - Modify** **E - Eliminate**

MAJOR OBJECTIVES

9 - 11 Years

A.	Participate in print awareness processes.	R	M	E
B.	Listen to and dramatize stories and nursery rhymes	R	M	E
C.	Engage daily in concept building processes.	R	M	E
D.	Participate daily in reading and writing processes.	R	M	E
E.	Use language processes to build community.	R	M	E

F. Read, write, speak and listen for a variety of purposes and audiences.

R M E

G. Discover and explore ideas using a variety of familiar experiences.

R M E

H. Relate one literary work to another. R M E

I. Use language processes to discover and explore thoughts, ideas, feelings and experiences.

R M E

J. Use language processes to comprehend and respond personally and critically to literary and media texts. R M E

K. Use language processes to manage ideas and information. R M E

L. Use language processes to enhance the clarity and artistry of communication.

R M E

M. Use rubrics to evaluate their language arts strategies and products for self-improvement.

R M E

N. Use language processes to choose and research a topic both individually and as a team member R M E

O. Participate in test-taking procedures with collaborative evaluation. R M E

Circle the appropriate letter indicating your choice.

SUGGESTED LEARNING EXPERIENCES/ACTIVITIES

9 - 11 Years

Dictated stories	R M E	Picture stories	R M E
Reciting Poems	R M E	Open-ended discussions	R M E
Show and tell	R M E	Storytelling	R M E
Role playing/Dramatizing	R M E	Observations	R M E
Informational reading	R M E	Informational writing	R M E
Following directions	R M E	Giving directions	R M E
Novel study	R M E	Graphic representation	R M E
Guided discussions	R M E	Presentations	R M E
Reader response activities	R M E	Viewer response activities	R M E
Student publications	R M E	Self-evaluation procedures	R M E
Teacher-pupil conferences	R M E	Peer conferences	R M E
Shared reading & writing	R M E	Author's circle	R M E
Reading/writing workshop	R M E	Reader's theatre	R M E
Silent sustained reading	R M E	Silent sustained writing	R M E
Book introductions (teacher & student initiated)	R M E		
Common entrance testing procedures	R M E		

Comment critically on the learning experiences/activities for the 6 - 8 age group. Feel free to make suggestions.

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Circle the appropriate letter indicating your choice.

R - Retain **M - Modify** **E - Eliminate**

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

9 - 11 Years

Teacher observations	R M E	Writing portfolios	R M E
Literacy folders	R M E	Teacher-pupil conferences	R M E
Work samples	R M E	Anecdotal records	R M E
Peer conferences	R M E		
Holistic scoring of language products with rubrics	R M E		

Comment critically on the assessment opportunities for the 9 - 11 age group. Feel free to make suggestions.

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Thank you!

APPENDIX D

PRACTITIONER-ORIENTED QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions without any inhibitions and in a professionally honest manner. Write on the back of the page if you need more space.

1. What is your teaching experience at the primary level?

2. Why do you think some children fail to acquire basic literacy skills by the end of their primary education?

3. What suggestions/changes would you make to help your students become successful before they graduate to secondary school?

4. How has your professional training been adequate for your language arts/reading instruction?

5. How has your professional training been inadequate for your language arts instruction?

6. In what ways is the current language arts syllabus adequate?

7. Where the syllabus is inadequate, what changes would you make or would you like to see made?

8. What are your views on the time allocation for language arts in the primary school?

9. What are your views on integrated language arts as opposed to teaching language arts as composition, grammar, spelling and poetry? Give your reasons.

10. How would your ideal language arts program deal with literacy development?

11. What are you major concerns about mandated language arts programs in which you have had no input?

12. Would you be willing to assist in designing a new language arts program which focuses on literacy development and the child's construction of meaning? Give your reasons.

13. What do you see as school or curricular conditions that would allow you to teach language arts more successfully?

14. What do you see as current barriers to your teaching language arts successfully?

Thank you!

APPENDIX E

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROFILE:
Critical Skills Required of the Barbadian Workforce

Please put an (✕) on the first dotted line next to those skills where you think schools are failing to prepare individuals for the workforce.

Then place a tick (✓) <u>on the inner dotted line</u> next to:-

- Those skills which provide the basic foundation to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results.
- The combination of skills, attitudes and behaviours required to get, keep and progress on a job and to achieve the best results.
- Those skills needed to work with others on a job and to achieve the best results.

- Please feel free to add to this list any skills that have been omitted.

Barbadian employers need a person who can:

- ---- ---- Understand and speak standard English as it is the language in which business is conducted
- ---- ---- Listen in order to understand and learn
- ---- ---- Read, comprehend and use written materials, including graphs, charts and displays
- ---- ---- Write standard English effectively
- ---- ---- Think critically and act logically to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions
- ---- ---- Understand and solve problems involving mathematics and use the results in practical situations
- ---- ---- Use technology, instruments, tools and information systems effectively
- ---- ---- Access and apply specialized knowledge from various fields (e.g., skilled

trades, technology, physical sciences, arts and social sciences)

- ---- ---- Continue to learn for life

Barbadian employers need a person who can demonstrate:

- ---- ---- Self-esteem and confidence
- ---- ---- Honesty, integrity and personal ethics
- ---- ---- A positive attitude toward learning, growth and personal health
- ---- ---- Initiative, energy and persistence to get the job done
- ---- ---- The ability to plan and manage time, money and other resources to achieve goals
- ---- ---- Accountability for actions taken
- ---- ---- A positive attitude toward change

- ---- ---- Recognition of and respect for people's diversity and individual differences

- ---- ---- The ability to identify and suggest new ideas to get the job done - creativity

Barbadian employers need a person who can demonstrate:

- ---- ---- Understand and contribute to the organization's goals

- ---- ---- Understand and work within the culture of the group

- ---- ---- Plan and make decisions with others and support the outcomes

- ---- ---- Respect the thoughts and opinions of the others in the group, and exercise "give and take" to achieve group results

- ---- ---- Seek a team approach as appropriate

- ---- ---- Lead when appropriate, mobilizing the group for high performance

Thank You!